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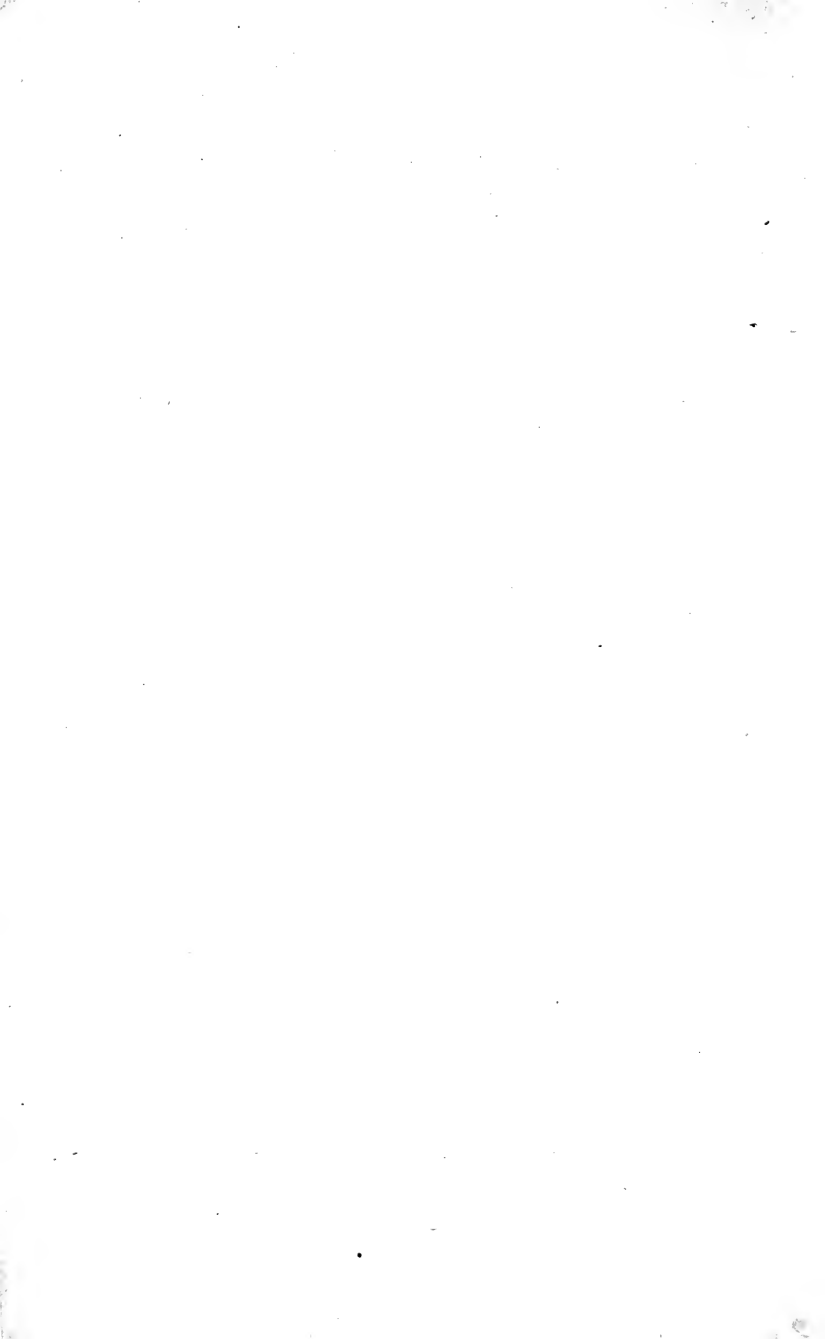
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BITTER SWEETS.

VOL. II.



BITTER SWEETS:

A LOVE STORY.

BY

JOSEPH HATTON.

THE web of our life is a mingled yarn, good and ill together: our virtues would be proud if our faults whipped them not; and our crimes would despair, if they were not cherished by our virtues.—SHAKESPEARE.

There is a comfort in the strength of love;
Twill make a thing endurable, which else
Would upset the brain, or break the heart.

WORDSWORTH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

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BITTER SWEETS:

A LOVE STORY.

CHAPTER I.

BEHIND THE MASK.

IN the supreme happiness of her married life, in the fond devotion of her husband, in her motherly love for the child which had blessed her union with Paul, five years had nearly wiped out the sorrows which, at the outset, had been coupled with Anna's joys.

There were times when sad memories would crowd into her heart and claim sorrow's customary tribute ; but the brief shadows only heightened the sunshine of her

settled happiness. She could talk about her uncle, with that loving familiarity with which lapse of time enables us to speak of loved ones who are gone. But the mention of Harry Thornhill always brought such a cloud upon Paul's brow that she seldom mentioned the old, old friend whose ring she still wore.

Sometimes she wondered at the change which marriage appeared to have wrought in Paul, and she often told him that she wondered at it. Not that the change was a subject for complaint. On the contrary, never had wife more affectionate husband. Paul's high spirits, his love of novelty, his delight in adventure, all appeared to have gone. His every thought seemed to be of Anna and her child, and Anna often said he would spoil them both.

When the silver bells at Helswick rang for morning and evening service, none responded to them more punctually than Paul Massey and his charming wife. There was not an object of benevolence in the

district to which Paul did not contribute, lavishly; there was not a scheme which had for its purpose the improvement of the poorer classes that he did not aid.

In good truth, from the day that Paul Massey married Anna Lee, he had given himself up to a life of devotion to her and all that was good. And yet Winford Barns was a frequent visitor at Denby Rise, and would startle the servants with oaths, and coarse jests. Mrs Massey had once, in her affectionately frank manner, asked her husband why he did not give up the acquaintance of a man who seemed so wicked and so vulgar. This question was the only one that had ever elicited from her husband anything like a command.

“You must not ask that question again, Anna dear,” said Paul very seriously; “I am under great obligations to him, and he must come here when he pleases.”

Anna bent her head, and then looked up at her husband, with a sorrowful inquiring glance.

“Don’t think me unkind, Anna,” Paul went on; “Barns was a different man once, and I can never be out of his debt.”

“I don’t think you unkind, Paul, and I will do whatever you wish, dear; but would it not be better to pay all you owe to him, and—”

“I cannot, Anna; do not ask it: I will relieve you of his society as much as possible. There, there! Let us take a walk on the beach, and don’t think any more about my grim cigar-smoking friend.”

Paul kissed his wife, chucked her under the chin, and suddenly became so gay, that Anna speedily forgot that such a person as Winford Barns was in existence.

But Paul’s forced smiles were gone when he was alone, and a settled melancholy put a seal upon his features. His was a dreadful state of existence; it was only his strength of mind, and his determination to make some atonement for his crime, that enabled him to support it. His terrible secret tortured him at all hours.

The memory of the thing seemed to burn into his heart, as the scarlet letter scorched and sere'd those bursting hearts in New England, of which Nathaniel Hawthorne hath told us. His wild nature was subdued with it, though the old spirit which, in his youthful days, had prompted him to travel, would, in lonely moments, when his wife was not with him, frequently take fierce possession of him. But it was the restlessness of the soul which seeks to flee from itself; the longing for some lonesome spot where memory should be overthrown. And now a new misery, a new dread, a new peril was before him. With the acuteness that seemed to come, chiefly from his big secret, he knew that Winford Barns would betray him: he felt that through him would come his punishment. The day of retribution appeared to draw nearer with every fresh sum of money which the voracity of his "friend" drew from him. He knew that this was the price of Winford's secrecy, and that some day, when he

could no longer pay the price, Winford's malicious tongue would babble.

Had it not been for Anna's sake, he could almost have prayed for the relief of this great exposure. Like many a malefactor, who has found it impossible to carry his load of guilt about with him, he would fain have given himself up to justice. But when he remembered that dying request of old Mountford's, "Be kind to her—love her always," and when Anna put her arm in his, and her child came clinging about his knees, some of the old defiance kindled in his eye against Winford Barns. For Paul Massey loved those two beings, with all the fervour of his ardent nature. And it galled him to the quick to think that he was robbing them to buy the silence of his arch-enemy, —robbing them to cover up a dead body with gold, to hide the ghost of the companion of his youth.

Already his estate on the Wear had gone to buy Winford's silence. Mrs Massey was easily reconciled to the sale,

when Paul told her that his object was to settle the amount upon their child in such a way that it would be more beneficial to him than it could otherwise be. Lie upon lie did Paul tell his wife, in order to put off the dreadful day which he knew *would* come. No moral nor religious compunction stood in the way of these falsehoods. Paul had no hope of salvation. He was a castaway, a wretch, who could not expect it; but he had repented of his great sin; nevertheless, he loved Anna, his wife, and he prayed that her life, and her child's future, might not be blighted through him. He prayed; but hope gave him no encouragement. He felt that his fight was a battle with Fate, and he knew that in the end he would be worsted.

In order to counteract Winford's attacks upon his purse he had speculated in various ways, but he had always been unsuccessful; and even such a contingency as poverty dawned upon him, to make his torments the greater.

"Let me buy your silence with a final sum," he said to Winford one day, when Barns had solicited a further loan, with more than ordinary insolence. "Name your price."

"How business-like we are to-day," Winford mockingly replied, "we were not wont to be so matter-of-fact."

"There need be no longer any disguise about our positions," said Paul. "The manner of your asking for money has been too peremptory, too arrogant, to make any other than one impression."

"And that impression?" said Winford coolly, lighting a cigar.

"Is that I am paying for my safety; that were I to refuse, you would carry out the threat which you have more than once made, howsoever vaguely."

"You were not always such a good interpreter of other men's intentions, Paul; you have read mine rightly."

"Coward! miserable coward!" exclaimed Paul. "Have you no compas-

sion, no feeling, no gratitude, no humanity?"

"Ah, ah, ah," laughed his tormentor, "that's devilish good. You are abundantly blessed with all those virtues, I suppose."

"I! I am more despicable than yourself, and ready to bend to the most terrible punishment: but there are others, Winford. You cannot be all stone: think of them. For myself, I ask nothing, but for them, I say, name the sum at which your silence is to be purchased, and I couple with it but one condition."

"Well, I don't wish to be hard," said the heartless spendthrift; "but I helped you into your new estates; I advised you to make up to the girl, you know."

Paul's love for Anna Lee had been no sordid one, and he bore this assumed partnership in her fortune with a heart ready to burst, and with fingers hitching to seize his tormentor and hurl him to the earth.

"It was a pleasant sitting down, for

you, as they say northwards, and it's only fair that you should deal handsomely with me," and Winford knocked a long ash from his cigar, and commenced a calculation. "Let me see, I owe £500 in a little matter of *roulet*, another instalment of £5000 towards the composition with those attentive creditors on the Tyne, certain fair ladies of Maryport must have £200 this week, and—but what condition is this you speak of?"

"The condition is that you write and sign a document which I shall dictate, describing Harry Thornhill's accidental death, and confessing therein that you were once wicked enough to try and make capital out of me, by basely and maliciously charging me with murder; all of which you now regret, pronouncing the truth of this declaration, which you make on condition that I do not prosecute you for slander; and that you leave England for ever, or permit me to do so. This will save the name I bear from a terrible blot; it will save my wife and child from a greater

misery than poverty. I ask a great thing—I will pay a great price for it.”

“Is that all?” inquired Winford, with a grim mocking smile.

“That is all.”

“And how much will you pay for that?”

“Perhaps all you may have the conscience to ask. And I will also, in writing, agree to take no advantage whatever of the document, and never to use it in any way, unless to produce it in a Court of Justice to which I may be summoned on any charge relative to Harry Thornhill.”

“But you want me to commit perjury. No, no, I can’t consent to that. I, Winford Barns, perjure myself, stain my fair reputation with crime! No, no, Paul Massey, that I cannot do,” said Winford in a bantering, jeering way. “But if we can agree as to the amount, and you will accept my word of honour; why, then I am open to negotiate.”

Paul made other propositions in which he endeavoured to secure himself against his tormentor ; but Winford Barns was too keenly alive to his power over his old friend to accept any terms which did not leave him a free agent.

“ No,” he said at length, “ I *may* come to that pass, Mr Massey ; the time *may* arrive when a pile of gold will tempt me even to a worse crime than perjury, but it is not yet, my friend. So, for the present, if you will just let me have, say ten thousand pounds—at five per cent., you know—a simple loan,—I’ll trouble you no more this two years, at any rate, and if I’m in luck, I’ll trouble you no more for ten years, perhaps. There ! Now can you say I’m selfish and sordid ? ”

Paul felt that it was useless to struggle further with his fate, just then ; so he consented to this twentieth loan.

“ If you leave here to-night I will order the money to be placed to your credit, at Maryport, by the next post.”

“It’s unkind in a host to give his guest notice to quit,” said Winford, emptying the brandy-bottle into his tumbler and tossing off the contents, “but I’ll not oppose you in that : so we’ll part at once.”

If Paul had taken particular note of the unhealthy, besotted, and generally dissipated appearance of his unwelcome guest, he might have seen a cause for hope in Winford’s trembling hand and glaring eyes. He looked like a man who would some morning be found dead in a gutter, or who would go off raving in a fit of *delirium tremens*. He had utterly sunk into the depths of debauchery, and his extravagance had gathered around him, in Maryport, depraved men and women who gladly encouraged his wicked orgies. But Paul received no hope from Winford’s debauchery : once, for two days, when the news reached Denby that he was nearly killed, Paul had hoped that his wife and child would be rescued from the pitfall to which he was leading them.

It was little that Bessie Martin could tell Richard Grey about Denby Rise. Mrs Massey often came to Beachstone's to buy books, and was a beautiful kind lady, and wore lovely dresses, and real diamonds. Mr Massey often came with her, and he was a very kind gentleman. They had a little girl with bright curly hair, and a very impudent groom, named Wittle, who had assurance enough to joke her, though she had not disliked him half so much since he had said that Richard Grey was a fine fellow. It was impudence, however, Bessie went on to say, for the man to tell her that Richard was rather fast; but she hoped soon to be away from Helswick. She had met Mr Massey on the beach once or twice, and although people said he was so happy, she thought he looked miserable: he would stand staring at the sea, as if he should like to be far away upon it. So she thought, however, when she saw him; but when he was with Mrs Massey he was so kind, so good, so attentive. Oh, how de-

lightful it must be, when people loved each other, to be always together ! “ Not to be separated as we are, dear Richard,” Bessie continued. “ But you will soon come, won’t you, and fetch your poor Bessie ? I am sure one of your letters has been lost ; for I have only had this short one. Do write often to me, and be sure to come soon.”

Bessie’s was a true description of Paul’s occasional solitary rambles ; but how incomplete ! Paul had thought all sorts of wild things in those reveries. Once it seemed as if a voice whispered to him that rest could only come through the death of Winford Barns, and then the prompter advised the forcible removal of his tormentor. Paul checked the murderous thought, and shuddered at the horrible suggestion. But the whisper came again, and seemed to ask what was the death of a worthless wretch such as Barns, compared with the happiness and safety of

Anna and her child. "Crush him out of your path—trample upon him," the tempter seemed to say, until Paul went home, in a frenzy of fear and dread, and lay seriously ill for many long weary days.

CHAPTER II.

JOE WITTLE DISCOVERS THAT "THINGS IS NOT
EXACTLY AS THINGS OUGHTER BE."

"SUPPOSING I were to turn out to be a very bad man, Anna," said Paul, after he had sufficiently recovered to be enabled to take exercise; "supposing you should discover that you had married a man of infamous character?"

"You alarm me, dear," said Anna, bending her clear bright eyes upon her husband, half fearful that the delirium of fever might be returning.

"Don't be alarmed, my love. Suppose, I say, you should discover, or it should be discovered, that I, Paul Massey, your husband, had been guilty of a great crime?"

Anna, who was standing by Paul's chair, before the bright fire which blazed up the library chimney, laid her arm fondly upon his, and nodded for him to proceed with his question.

"Should you love me then, as dearly as you do now?"

"I shall always love you, Paul; but the supposition you put to me is altogether out of my power to imagine, much more to accept as a probability;" said Anna, her open countenance, full of confidence and love, endorsing every word she said.

"But I wish you to try and realize it," said Paul, looking into the fire.

"Don't frighten me, dear," Anna said gravely.

"Suppose it, Anna. Just suppose it, for the sake of supposition, love," said Paul, taking her hand in his.

"Well, then, if I must humour you, Paul, I should love you more than I love you now; I should pity you so much,

knowing that if you had done anything wicked, your hot fervent nature had been to blame, and not your kind loving heart."

"God bless you, Anna!" said Paul, taking her face between his two hands and kissing it.

"Why did you put such a strange question, my pet?" Anna asked, looking up at the pale, handsome face of her husband.

"You say I said such strange things when I was delirious, Anna; that I prayed so earnestly for forgiveness, for your sake; that I—that I—"

The remembrance of what Anna had said, with regard to his ravings during the fever, overcame him: he covered his face with his hands and threw himself back into his chair.

"You are weak, my love; you should not excite yourself in this way. I am very, very sorry I told you about what you said; but you were so anxious to know, Paul—so anxious. Don't think of

it, dear. Surely you do not imagine that I believed you had done anything wicked. Dear Paul, I have heard that when the mind of a man is burthened with some dreadful weight of guilt—which is not your case, my love,” said Anna, smiling lovingly upon him—“I have heard that, when such is the case, a man does not disclose it in delirium. Oh, Paul, Paul, dear Paul, I know your soul to be unsullied, and your love to be the truest, the best, the fondest.”

Paul removed his hands, and looked up at his wife, as though he had just awakened from a dream.

“How foolish I am, Anna dear; I have been asking some silly question—I am not quite well yet, love, and my thoughts are a little wandering. How the wind blows! It must be a stormy night at sea.”

Anna had knelt down and laid her head upon her husband's knee, and Paul stroked her fair brown hair.

“However foolish I may be, Anna, and even if I were very wicked, I love you truly, do I not?”

Anna turned her face towards him, and kissed the hand that caressed her.

A few minutes afterwards they went, arm in arm, to the drawing-room, and Anna lulled Paul's unhappy thoughts to rest with that exquisite melody, the sprite's song, from “Oberon,” which rose and fell, like the gentle murmur of an inland lake, when a summer breeze moves it with lullaby-ripples. Through many a subdued variation Anna's dear fingers seemed to charm out the soothing melody, until Paul dozed before the fire, in blissful forgetfulness.

It was just at this time that Joe Wittle unlocked the door of Harkaway's stable, and entered, shutting out the wind that made an effort to follow him.

A candle was burning, in a sconce, on the wall, and Harkaway had been duly

“suppered up,” as Joe designated the last offices which the favourite mare required at his hands.

“Yes, old gal, I’m come to think just ten minutes, and then we’ll put out the light, as they says in the play, and go to bed.”

Joe perched himself upon an old corn bin, and kicked it with the heels of his short legs.

“‘Suppose I should turn out to be a werry bad man; suppose your husband had committed a werry great crime!’ Them was the werry words,” said Joe, looking straight at the flame of the candle.

Harkaway turned her head, and stamped her off foreleg, as though she wished to attract Joe’s attention.

“All right, old gal; for you are agettin’ aged, my pet; I’m just a talking to myself.”

Harkaway turned to her oats again, and was silent.

“‘Supposing I had committed a werry

great crime !' Them's werry queer words, master, werry queer words. It's not for me to know as you've said 'em, of course ; and I'm as hinfernal a spy and eavesdropper, as Mat Dunkum says, perhaps, to have heard 'em ; but the hintention being good, the act ain't so bad. All right, my beauty."

This latter expression to Harkaway, who stamped her foot again.

"Two and two don't make five," went on Joe, thrusting his hands into his waistcoat pockets, "and five and two don't make six ;" with which arithmetical observation he dropped his legs upon the stable floor and dropped his little body after them, and the twain went to Harkaway, who rubbed her nose against Joe's cheek.

"Yes, old gal, things is not exactly as things oughter to be ; but your heart's in the right place yet, and your nose too," and Joe patted the sleek neck so vigorously, that his patting roused up, in the next

stable, a fast-trotting cob, which plunging violently in its jealous rage, Joe was obliged to go to it and say "So-ho," and "Gently, my sweet," and "So-ho," until the cob was quiet again; and then he turned up the stable bucket, and appeared to be mentally examining the hay-loft, as we saw him on that night, long ago, when he drove Mrs Grey to the Denby caverns.

"If I could circumvent that ere fire-eating friend of master's, as has got him in his clutches somehow, I should say, Richard Grey, I'm werry much obliged to you for being the cause of my getting a taste for acting the spy."

It may seem absurd to some of our readers that Joe should have talked aloud to himself of matters evidently so important; but he had so long been in the habit of talking to his horses, that the stable had become his "thought-box," as he called it, and it was an assistance to him to speak his thoughts.

"It helps me to arrange 'em," he said

to Harkaway, who occasionally seemed to put in a protest against these thinking talks, "it helps me to dot my ideas down and put 'em straight, and look at 'em, old gal; and as they are werry important ideas just now, I must beg to be excused for arranging 'em so often in your presence; so jest go on with yer supper, and don't mind Joseph."

"Master's afraid of that ere Barns; that's Idea I.," Joe continued after a pause, during which he provided himself with a piece of chalk. "Barns is a ruining master, in consequence—I've heered some of their private confabs; that's Idea II. Barns has threatened to split—I've heered him; that's Idea III. The last time Master Barns came the heavy money dodge to the tune of a good many thousands, master was so overcome he took, and had a fever; that's Idea IIII. Master said queer things in that ere fever; Idea IIIII. He has just now asked missus (God bless her!) suppose he had done a great crime; Idea IIIIII.

That's enough ideas to bother a fellow, and quite enough for to-night;" with which after-thought Joe rose from the bucket, patted Harkaway, abstractedly, blew out the light, and went out himself.

CHAPTER III.

PAUL MASSEY AT BAY.

A FEW days after Joe had chalked up these ideas, a letter arrived at Denby Rise which sorely troubled Mr Massey. The hand that had directed it had trembled whilst doing so, and the envelope was blotted, and badly sealed. Paul had grown very much excited after reading it, and had told his wife that he had received some bad news. He feared they would have to reduce their establishment, and live more economically. He was most unfortunate, he said, in his investments.

Mrs Massey looked becomingly grave about the matter, though she was only troubled to see Paul troubled. But when their child came into the room to show

mamma the little whip which Joe Wittle had been commissioned to purchase, with a new set of pony harness and a side-saddle, at Maryport, Paul's continual losses touched her, for a moment, through her daughter. For her own part, she could bear and endure anything, but Paul's unsuccessful speculations might interfere with Katy's prospects in life; so she asked Paul what these losses were, and how they were produced. A vague statement about the fluctuations in the price of money, Stock Exchange panics, the failure of a bank, and the mistake of an agent in the matter of some railway debentures, did not make affairs at all clear, in her estimation; but what should she know about such things? She asked Paul whether it was necessary that he should have anything to do with the Stock Exchange, or with railways.

Paul, with a sigh, said money must be invested, must be put to account, and he only wished he had better luck, or a

wider financial knowledge. It was useless, however, to repine—his losses, one way and another, had been very great, and they must reduce their expenditure accordingly. They might, perhaps, have to leave Denby Rise.

Anna's heart beat quickly, and the tears came into her eyes at the thought of this; and an observer might easily have noticed what a severe struggle Paul had had with himself, before he had summoned up sufficient courage to indicate so much of the reverse of fortune which threatened them. But he was evidently bent on preparing his household and his friends for a great change. When his doctor came that morning, he told him he had received very bad tidings of serious monetary losses. The rector of Helswick and his wife, who dined with them that day, received a similar intimation just before their carriage was called for their return home. And the next day Mrs Massey, following the instructions of her husband, told her maid

that they would be compelled to reduce their establishment.

Thus it speedily got abroad that the Masseys were in difficulties in consequence of losses by railways, and losses in a bank, and losses on the Stock Exchange, and that nobody knew what the end of it might be. Mrs Massey had said to her maid, who told the housekeeper, who had informed the grocer's wife at Helswick, who had mentioned it to the post-office, which had alluded to it at a private party, that, perhaps, they might leave Denby Rise for several years.

The news did not come so suddenly to Joe Wittle as to the rest of the household; but it worried Joe Wittle more than any other member of the domestic staff. He went with it to his thought-box, and sat on his bucket, for a full half-hour, without speaking. Harkaway had gone out with the master, which enabled Joe to take uninterrupted walks about the stable, when he was tired of sitting. He contemplated

the marks which he had made a few days before, and which he had several times endeavoured to add up, and divide, and subtract, to his satisfaction, but always without success.

“It’s a aggrawaitin thing when you’ve got the ideas and can’t make nothin’ of them, after you’ve made so much, to speak contradictory like,” said Joe, his little eyes looking inquiringly up at the hay-rack.

“There’s something werry wrong somehow, and Winford Barns is at the bottom of it; but how it’s to be set right, blessed if I know. Joseph, Joseph, if you’d only a wife of your buzzum to argue the pint with! But then she might go a hargifyin of it to somebody else’s wife, and that wouldn’t do. Perhaps it’s better as it is. It’s quite certin as master’s done something wrong, and that’s my difficulty. It would be a werry hard thing if I were to go on a meddlin’ until I brought *that* to light. Them as lives long enough will see something, no doubt; but what I shall do, is jest to see if

I can't get something out of that ere Dunkum, though he do swear he'll be the death of me if I don't mind my eye. There's no doubt that letter, which was from that devil Barns, as I see the well-known carriers, when the post-office was a putting it in the bag—there is no doubt that ere letter is the cause of all the trouble just now, and Mat being Mr Barns's head man, which office he must ha' got the Lord knows how, and which he keeps in the same way, considering how he talks to the Commodore, as he calls him.

"Yes! I'm getting all abroad in my ideas; my thoughts is bolting awfully," Joe went on, after a pause, finally giving himself up to the bucket and a careful examination of his boots.

Paul Massey's energies seemed, for a time, to strengthen with his difficulties. The fact that he was being punished for his crime, might have had its good influence, even though it were coupled with

the punishment of those who had not deserved to suffer.

“We will get away, love, to some distant place, where no one will know us; a few years of careful economy may bring my affairs round again,” he said to Anna, raising his head, and looking like a man at bay with obstacles which he was determined to overcome.

“It makes me happy, Paul, to see you so cheerful. I have not seen so much light in your eye, and such a hopeful expression in your face, since your illness. I am ready to go wherever you wish, and at any moment.”

Then Paul sat down, with his child between his knees, and husband and wife talked together about the future, as happily and hopefully as though they were only just going to be married and begin the world anew. For Anna felt her love increase, if that were possible, towards Paul, now that they were no longer very rich. There seemed to her to be new life in her affec-

tion, fresh reasons for its budding anew and striking out more tendrils that should cling about her husband and their child.

Paul felt that it would be a relief to leave Denby for ever, to leave it far behind him, with its dark associations which overshadowed its brighter ones. He thought that he could now make such an arrangement with Barns as would satisfy his tormentor, and leave himself at peace to continue his atonement, and administer to the happiness of the woman to whom he had devoted himself.

The first shock of Barns's letter, in which another sacrifice was demanded, had been depressing; but when it began to dawn upon Paul that this might be the last shock, that this might be the last sacrifice, his old determination to make his wife's days happy, and to carry out her uncle's dying request, revived strongly within him; and imagination began to picture a quiet, happy home in some rural spot, within sound of the bells of a village

church, where he could devote himself to Anna, and to works of religion and charity.

If Paul had pictured himself in some busy, throbbing town, ministering to the weak and weary in narrow streets and close alleys, he would better have fulfilled the notion of a self-sacrificing life; but Anna was his first consideration, and he thought he saw, through the gloom, bright lights falling upon her path.

The next day he went to Maryport to make these final arrangements with Winford Barns,—who was not likely to live long to trouble anybody. Barns had conveyed as much to Paul in the letter, but had coupled with it his intention of leading a jolly life while it lasted, for which purpose he wanted more funds. He further intimated that it was his intention to visit Denby, with sundry friends of his, and to spend a month there. Paul Massey, Esquire, need be in no hurry to prepare, for he did not intend to come until the weather was warmer.

Paul had at once conceived the idea of letting Denby Rise, or selling it, and leaving the locality altogether; and, full of this plan, he went to see Barns, to settle the terms.

He found Barns magnificently lodged at Hightown, an aristocratic suburb of Maryport, and he found him craving for money. Paul, in firm tones, which somewhat startled the battered *roué*, said this must be their last meeting. If Barns did not agree to his terms upon this occasion, he would go to the nearest police station, give himself up to justice, and denounce Winford Barns as an accessory to the murder.

“You’ll not do that,” said Barns in a husky voice, and coughing between each word. “Shut that confounded door, — it; I shall die of draughts,” though the atmosphere of the room was almost stifling.

“I shall do it, you infamous rascal,” said Paul, clenching his fist.

"Keep off, keep off, —— you, or I'll call out and give you up myself," said Winford, coughing again, and drawing his soft-cushioned chair nearer the fire.

"That you will not, so long as I have this," and Paul drew from his pocket a roll of bank notes.

"The *roué* raised his red eyelids with a pleased expression, and asked, "How much? how much? You Jew, you Midas."

"Five thousand pounds."

"Humph! give it me," he said, stretching out his hand.

"On condition," said Paul.

"What is it? I shan't live very long, so conditions don't much matter now."

"Sign this paper, and you shall not only have the five thousand, but my note of hand for five thousand more, to be cashed in six months, if you are alive."

"Make it three months, —— it, make it three?"

"Be it so," said Paul.

“Read the paper, and, —— it, let’s drop this parleying—there’s all sorts of devils and spiders coming on the walls again.”

Paul read a brief paper, somewhat similar to the one which Winford had previously refused to sign. This second one he had drawn up in a more strictly legal phraseology, having made it his study for months.

“No, —— you, I’ll not sign it,” said Barns, after a pause.

There was a knock at the door, and a servant entered.

“Now, Tom, what is it? what the devil is it?”

“Please, sir, I would rather tell you privately.”

“Then come here and whisper, you thief.”

The servant obeyed, and the whisper set the master swearing and cursing; in the midst of which a stout shabby-looking man entered, put his hand upon Winford’s

shoulder, and said, "At suit of Tomkins, you are my prisoner."

Paul's heart beat wildly for a moment, but he soon saw that Winford was arrested at a civil suit, and the momentary fear passed away.

"—— you, am I your prisoner? You infernal thief, who told you so?" exclaimed Barns, nearly choking with rage and disease. "What's the amount, you beast?"

"Three hundred pounds," said the man, calmly.

"Pay the money, Paul; pay the money."

"Will you sign this receipt?" Paul asked, showing Barns the short agreement.

"No, no," and then he fell a cursing again.

"Then, good morning; in five minutes there shall be an arrest of a different kind;" and Paul strode away, looking as resolute as he could, though he was very

nervous about the result of this bold venture upon Barns's cowardice.

"—— him, call him back; he's fool enough to do anything; call him back."

Paul was at the bottom of the stairs before he responded to the loud calls for his return.

"Pay the money," said Barns, as Paul re-entered the room.

"Will you sign the receipt, and let us settle the whole business? this gentleman can witness the deed."

"Yes, yes, what does it matter?—a year will see me out—give me a pen."

And the paper was signed. Paul turned back the writing, that it might be witnessed without the contents being read.

The bailiff walked off with the amount at suit of Tomkins, and when he was gone Paul handed the rest of the money to his sometime friend, and casting from him the hand which the arch-deceiver stretched out to be shaken when the

bargain was concluded, he went away and breathed more freely than he had breathed for years. But the pangs of conscience continued to make sad work with Paul's once stalwart frame, notwithstanding.

CHAPTER IV.

BEARDING THE LION IN HIS DEN.

JOE WITTLE was determined to see Mat Dunkum, and endeavour to get from him the secret of the great influence which Winford Barns possessed over his master.

“It’s a werry ticklish job,” said Joe, “but I’ll try it on ; many a werry ticklish job has been done by trying it on ; so here goes !”

Joe found it exceedingly difficult to meet with Mat Dunkum either at the caverns or at the cottage. Several days had passed away since he started off to the latter place, with “here goes” on his lips.

At length the persevering groom tracked Mat to the cottage, and followed him boldly. In answer to his modest

knock at the door, a gruff voice said "Come in," and in Joe went accordingly.

"What the blazes do you want?" said Mat, taking a short pipe from his mouth.

"Well, you see, Mr Dunkum, I couldn't keep away—"

"Couldn't keep away," exclaimed Mat, before Joe had finished what he was about to say, "why I've a good mind to kick you out."

"Don't do that," said Joe meekly, "cos' it wouldn't be fair for you to hit one so much under your size."

"It would be fair to strangle a whelp like you any day in the week."

"Well, if that's all the reward I'm to have for my good intentions, I'll say good artemnoon," said Joe, taking a step backwards.

"No you don't," said Mat, rising and standing beside the groom with rather startling rapidity; "what's your game—what are you up to?"

“Leave go of my collar,” exclaimed Joe reddening, “or I’ll not answer for the consequences—I’m telling yer.”

“Hah, hah, hah!” roared Mat, amused at Joe’s threatening attitude. “Here, sit down, and unfurl your yarn at once, or, by Davy’s locker, I’ll pull you joint from joint.”

A mental picture of himself, after such an operation, presenting itself to Joe’s imagination, he picked up his scattered limbs, and sat down upon a pair of the principal ones.

“Well, you see, I’ve brought you this to begin with,” said Joe, taking from his capacious pocket a bottle of brandy; “I know it’s good.”

“Humph!” said Mat, screwing out the cork, “poisoned perhaps; I’ll make you swallow every drop if it is.”

“I brought it, yer see, Mister Dunkum, as a sort of peace-offering atween you and me; for I’ve had a dream, and a werry ugly dream.”

Mat sat down and resumed his pipe.

"Yes a dream," said Joe, noticing that the circumstance made some impression.

"Well," said Mat, who bethought himself of sundry dreams which had lately troubled his rest, and made him give up sleeping at the caverns.

"I dreamt of you and Mister Barns."

Mat stared at Joe with some surprise, and frowned fiercely.

"And I dreamt as how you was werry ill, and that ere Mister Barns stood by your bed-side and see you die without any compunction."

Mat winced at this, and watched Joe suspiciously.

"Without any compunction. Yes, and more nor that, for when everybody's back was turned he pulled out a knife, and stuck you."

"Humph!" He wouldn't mind doing that, thought Mat.

"And as I'd not seen you for a werry long time, and as a voice in my dreaming

ear said, 'Joseph, bear no malice — go and see him, he is lonely, he may be dying,' I couldn't refuse, and so I have come: and if you've no objection, Mister Dunkum, to let bygones be bygones, why I should sleep all the happier."

"I suppose you liked that young Grey," said Mat, gruffly.

"Well, I did," said Joe, cautiously.

"And you thought I was a great rascal — eh? That made you spy about, and try to get him from me."

"I'm werry sorry I offended you in that affair, Captain," said Joe, scratching his head. "But you see his mother was in such a way."

"His mother! I could strangle her!" exclaimed Mat. "Don't talk of his mother."

"Well, I won't if it aint agreeable," said Joe, trying to reach the ground with his toes, and straining his little legs ineffectually in the attempt.

"Everybody thinks me a thief and

a brute; and it's through her," said Mat.

"I heard as how she behaved bad," said Joe.

Mat gave a savage grunt, and asked his former question, "Did you like the lad?"

"Well, yes, I did — somehow you couldn't help liking of him."

"No—I hated the cub at first, but, — me, I began to like him as if he was my own."

"Did you, now?" said Joe, succeeding in putting his feet upon the second stave of the chair, and proudly thrusting his hands into his waistcoat pockets.

"Yes," said Mat laconically, as if dissatisfied at himself for holding anything like a civil conversation with Joe.

"Indeed!" said Joe.

"Here, let's taste your liquor," said Mat.

Joe leaped from his chair, and Mat reached a couple of horn tumblers and filled them.

“Now floor that, first,” said Mat, “as a token that it’s not poison.”

“Certainly,” said Joe. “Yer health, Captain, and may you never live to die in such a melancholy way as I see you in my dream at the hands of Mister Barns !”

“Mr Barns, be ——, he’s an infernal humbug,” Mat replied, tossing off a hornful of brandy.

The truth is Mat had seriously felt the reduction of Mr Barns’s purse. The yacht had been sold, and Mat, with difficulty, could but procure the most trifling amounts from his Commadore, as he called Barns.

“Well, I’ve thought so, do you know, often,” said Joe; “but look here, Mister Dunkum, let us shake hands to show that you bears no malice—why should we be ill friends ?”

“You thought I was a ruining that boy,” said Mat.

“I ain’t in a position to say what I thought; but it seemed as if I was only hackherwated for his good,” said Joe,

“and out of no disrespect to you, Mister Dunkum, who I wish to be friends with.”

“Well, on them grounds I’ll shake hands,” said Mat, “for I liked that boy, and may be it wor best as you should get him away.”

The two shook hands accordingly, and applied themselves to the bottle.

“Since I had that dream, Mister Dunkum, I’ve been a thinking a good deal about the hinfluence Mister Barns has over master, and I’ve got some ideas about it.”

“Have you?” said Mat, curiously.

“I’m satisfied as Mister Barns knows something, as he makes master pay dearly for, and is nigh a ruining of him.”

“And you think you’ll make friends with me to get at it.”

“No, no ; now, no questions against a man’s honour. If you think so, don’t tell me anything, and then you’ll be on the right side,” said Joe, with an air of frankness.

"I shan't," said Mat, tossing off another horn of liquor.

"It's a werry hard thing, though, to be obliged to reduce your establishment, and give up your residence, 'cos a friend has got a secret, and threatens to split," said Joe.

"Is it come to that?" said Mat earnestly. "Is Mr Massey going to leave the neighbourhood?"

"He is."

"And through Barns?"

"He is," said Joe, looking hard at Mat, and stretching his toes towards the floor—"I'm telling yer."

"I knowed Barns was rather hard on him; but I didn't know it was so stiff as that."

"Why, he's next to ruined—leastwise he's only got a reasonable sort of sum to keep on with—and I shall lose my place."

"Lose your place!" exclaimed Mat.

"Yes, and Harkaway and all the 'osses is to be sold, and Denby Rise guv up."

"The devil!" said Mat, laying down his pipe and putting his elbows on the table, the better to take in all Joe said.

"Yes, and that made me more nor ever wish to be friends along of you, 'cos I've a werry great notion of leaving England. You see I've saved money, a tidy sum, too; and I can do werry fair, no doubt."

"Well, I'm glad you came, mate," said Mat, "and here's my hand on it."

"I'm werry sorry for master; I'd give all I've got to serve him, and to punish that ere Barns," said Joe mournfully.

"It's hard for that pretty young woman as Mr Massey married," said Mat.

"Hard! It's murder. She's one of the best creatures as is."

"For a woman, for a woman, perhaps she may be. What do you think this secret is, then, as gets over the guvnor?" Mat asked.

"Ah, there's the point—I've got it all down except the sum total; but it will

come right in the end, I've got my ideas," said Joe.

"*I could tell you,*" said Mat, who was growing more and more confidential now that he saw Barns's capability of supplying him with money was getting weaker, and that he had been so selfish in his dealings with Mr Massey. Moreover, the Commodore in his drunken fits had cursed Mat, and defied him; had twitted him with his dependence upon him, and called him "beggar," "smuggler," "thief;" for which Mat had only recently turned round upon Barns and threatened to strangle him, and do other dire deeds of vengeance, if Barns did not treat him differently.

"*I could tell you,*" said Mat.

"Could you, now?" said Joe, eagerly.

"But I shan't."

"Oh!" said Joe, with an air of disappointment.

"It might be worth your while; but then I aint come here to be a prying

into your affairs," said Joe, "and as the sun's going down, I think it's time I was hoff."

"Stay a bit, mate," said Mat, "what's your hurry?"

"No, I can't, thankee," said Joe; "but I'll look in again, if you've no objection—it's not werry long I shall be in these parts," said the groom, mournfully.

"Well, give us another look in to-morrow about this time; I'll be in," said Mat.

"And you won't kick me out now, Captain, eh?" said Joe, smilingly.

"No more of that," Mat answered; and with this the two parted—Joe Wittle fully satisfied with the progress he had made, and Mat Dunkum in a state of considerable uneasiness and uncertainty about what his course should be, in the changing circumstances to which Joe had referred.

At the same hour of the following evening Joe went to Mat's cottage; and he re-

peated his visits for many days. He purposely avoided the subject, in which he had felt so much interest, until Mat re-introduced it, and thereby completely upset Mat's early suspicions as to the cause of Joe's determined friendship. It was, however, soon sufficiently manifest to Joe that there was bad blood between Mr Barns and Mat, and that through this disaffection a golden key might unlock the secret that had bound them together.

Mat had for several years been so accustomed to have plenty of money and to spare, that the shortening—nay, the almost cutting off—of supplies made it hard to bear with Barns's insolence.

"I've only one hobjeck to serve, Mat," said Joe, at the end of one of these later interviews, "and that is the hinterest of master and mistress."

Mat smoked on in silence.

"My master has no more idea as I suspects anything about the hinfluence of that halligator Barns, no more nor that old

pistol hanging above your head has. I'd give all I have to serve that good dear lady as was so much loved by my old guvner. I would, 'pon my soul—you needn't smile as if you didn't believe it."

"I was only thinking what fools women make of men, whether they be their husbands or their servants," said Mat, "I don't disbelieve you."

"Now look here, Mister Dunkum, I've never asked you to split of anything you knows, and I aint a-goin' to now; but we may both on us be said to be a-goin' down the hill of life; natur's got the drag on my wheels nicely, and I thanks her for it. But we shall both on us get to the bottom soon. There's them as is younger—if we could do 'em a good turn in any way to make 'em not jolt so a-goin' down the rough road, why it's our dooty to do it—and—"

"What the blazes are you driving at?" exclaimed Mat; "I've nothing to do with dooty; nobody's done their dooty by me."

“Well, now, this is what I was going to say: if there’s anything you could tell me, as would floor that ere Barns, I’d gladly share with you half my savings—I don’t want money—it aint no good to me.”

“No, I’m not going to be bought by you, Joseph,” said Mat; “don’t come that dodge over me—it won’t do. But if all’s true as you’ve said, and considering as that Barns is such a —— infernal selfish thief, and other things settled between us, I’ll let you into a secret.”

“Yes,” said Joe, excitedly.

“Not now, not now; but all in good time. I can’t say as it’ll do you any good, or anybody else; maybe it will, and maybe it won’t.”

“Indeed!” said Joe, fidgeting with his fur helmet.

“When Mr Massey leaves Denby Rise, and you goes away, you shall know something, on certain conditions.”

After most elaborate arrangements and stipulations, and vows, in which money was not altogether left out of the question, Mat subsequently told Joe a secret that made his hair almost stand on end.

Joe rubbed out the ideal sum in Harkaway's stable, on the night when the mystery was made clear to him, and he thanked God that *he* was not Paul Massey, Esquire.

CHAPTER V.

BESSIE MARTIN.

FOR more than seven months no tidings had come to England from Richard Grey. Since he had announced to his mother, and to Bessie Martin, in a few brief lines, that he had left the employment of Welford and Co., he had not written to any one. Mrs Grey, who had wept many an hour, in secret, over her boy's misconduct, continually finding out fresh excuses for him, watched anxiously for a letter by every post ; and every post disappointed her.

But even Mrs Grey's anxiety had not equalled that of poor Bessie Martin, who had grown pale and haggard, with watching and crying. Mrs Beachstone had

noticed Bessie's sadness, and had tried to comfort her, but without avail, and at length had determined upon calling in Dr Fell to see the poor little assistant.

Bessie had seriously made up her mind to run away, and go to America, that very week. In fact, she had packed up a little bundle to carry away with her, and had arranged other things, so that her boxes might be sent after her. She had ascertained at what hour the train left Chipswood each morning, and had made up her little agitated mind to walk thither, and take a ticket to Maryport.

Mrs Beachstone's decision with regard to medical advice, had only resulted in Bessie's starting off two days earlier. She must go to Richard. She must see him. There was no help for it. She had written and told him so. Perhaps he was ill; perhaps he had not written to her, because she had said she would run away to him, and he was expecting her. He had not deserted her. Oh, no, he would not do that.

She would go, nevertheless. She could not stay in Helswick; she must get to America. That very night she would set off. She was just sitting down to write a little note to Mrs Beachstone which she intended to put in the post, asking forgiveness for her ingratitude in leaving so strangely, when the postman came into the shop and gave into her trembling hands a letter with a foreign stamp upon it.

When she was alone she kissed the letter and put it into her bosom, and seized upon the first favourable opportunity to run to her room and read it. It was a short letter, a cruelly short letter. Bessie pushed her black curls back from her forehead, as she read it, word for word; pushed her hair back and rubbed her eyes, and then gave a deep subdued cry, like one in a death agony.

“If what you say is true, I am very sorry for you, and I enclose you a bill for three pounds, which may be useful; but you must not come here; and you will not do

so, when I tell you that, if I once thought I loved you, the dream is over. I was a boy and a fool, and you should not have believed me ; besides which, I am an abandoned outcast with neither love nor care for anybody. Make no mistake, Bessie ; you are young, and will soon get over the loss of a fellow like me—you had better go to my mother's, she loves you as if you were her own."

Bessie pored over these words until her eyes blazed with indignation and woe. "If what I say is true," "a bill for three pounds," "loves me no longer," she gasped, until she was fain to press her hand upon her heart to keep it from bursting. She could not cry—no tears came to her relief ; she could only moan and look about like one bewildered. She could not pray, she could not think ; her mind was, for the time, a total wreck. Called to her duties by Mrs Beachstone, she crumpled up the letter and went down-stairs, with her eyes wide open, and her hair dishevelled ; but

the sudden remembrance of Mrs Beachstone's purpose recalled her to action, and she went back to her room, smoothed her hair, made a great effort to be calm, and outwardly succeeded.

She went to bed at the usual hour, but not to sleep. She threw herself upon the same bed from which she had risen on that May morning, in the previous year, to gather May-flowers — she lay upon her bed with her blasted hopes, and with the letter grasped in her hand, but she did not weep, and she did not moan ; she lay like a poor stricken thing, too much hurt for grief.

Hour by hour, the old Helswick clock struck the time, and at midnight the silvery chimes beat out a solemn chant in the blue star-light of the new year. One and two o'clock came, and then Bessie rose.

Lighting the candle, that stood upon the little oak dressing-table, she put it on the floor, in the furthest corner of the room,

and shielded it with a towel, hung upon a chair, so that the light might not be observed. She laid a note upon the table, hurriedly drew round her shoulders a thick shawl, and fastened a scarf about her neck. Then taking up a small bundle, ready packed, she blew out the light, and after listening for a few moments, she glided out of the room, and went down-stairs, past the servant's bed-room, down to the second landing, past Mrs Beachstone's bed-room, down into the kitchen, and out into the cold January morning. She stood for a few moments, after she had closed the door, stood upon the very spot where the girls and boys had waited for her on that bright May morning, when she was to be Queen.

And then she set off to walk to Chipswood—ten miles—which was the nearest railway station to the fashionable little town of Helswick. There had been some talk of bringing the railway to the town, but the authorities rose, *en masse*, to oppose

it, and so they were left quietly out of the world, and they liked it.

The stars shone down upon the queer little town, and the sea was moaning in the darkness, and everything that could be seen was white with frost. Bessie walked swiftly onwards, on through by-paths until she was out of the town, and then out upon the dreary highway, with tall white hedges on either side.

It was half-past five when she reached Chipswood junction. The signal lamps cast long coloured rays of light upon the dark little box of a station.

There was no light, no fire, in any part of the poor little place at present, except in a tiny house a few yards off, where the pointsman stood, with his back to the fire, waiting for a luggage-train, that could be just heard rumbling along in the distance. Hearing footsteps, the pointsman came out, and being a kind-hearted fellow, he asked Bessie to step inside his box until the train came, which, he said, would be half-an-

hour yet. Bessie sat down upon a low seat before the fire, and waited for the train.

“This is a luggage-train as is coming,” said the pointsman, “so you needn’t mind it; the government is due at six; warm yourself well, miss; never mind me, you look cold and ill.”

For the first time since she had received that cruel letter, the tears welled up into Bessie’s eyes. The kind words of the old man (who had daughters of his own and could feel for the cold, haggard-looking girl before him) had touched her.

The luggage-train came hissing and groaning and panting by the point-house. The red fire from the engine beamed upon the shining rails, and the air was luminous with flame from the chimney. The men called to each other in the dark morning, and their voices were thick and husky, coming through woollen comforters, which were wrapped about their faces.

At length the luggage-train was shunted

upon a branch line, and the guard went off home, and the engine-driver and the stoker went into the pointsman's box to warm their coffee; whilst the engine stood snorting and fizzing by the hedge-side. Then the pointsman came to Bessie and told her it was time to get her ticket, and she went out and took her turn at the little window, where several men and a woman were taking tickets for various places. After they had all been served they stamped about the platform, in the cold, until the train came up and took them away in its damp and chilly boxes.

It was broad day-light when Bessie reached Maryport. Not in all her life had she seen so much bustle as there was at the railway station, and things did not improve when she was outside the big arched building, where she was hustled by foot passengers, and nearly run over by cabs and 'busses.

A policeman, noticing Bessie's dif-

ficulty, asked her if she had lost her way.

“I am going to America,” said Bessie, “and I want to find a respectable boarding-house near the docks.”

The policeman said the best thing she could do would be to take a cab—the fare was only a shilling; and in a few minutes Bessie was set down at the door of the “Maryport Arms,” close by the basin from which the boats for America started.

The landlady, a buxom woman of about forty, came into the passage whilst Bessie was making her inquiries. Seeing that the girl was ill and cold, she took her into the bar and gave her some hot coffee, and insisted upon her having a little brandy in it. Bessie had fainted before she could put the coffee to her lips; but she soon recovered again. The landlady, after eyeing her curiously, yet compassionately, went out to her husband who was talking to some early customers in the tap-room.

"Pack her off, pack her off," said the man in a whisper, "unless she has some friends in the place."

"No, no, poor soul, we'll not do that, Jem."

"Ah, there you are again with your sympathy, as you call it; can she pay her bill?"

"For the matter of that I'm sure she can," said the woman; "she's well dressed, and wants to go by the steamer in the morning, and has given me the money to send for her ticket."

"Do what you like," said the landlord impatiently, and the woman went back to Bessie.

"There, my dear, take your things off," she said, proceeding to help her; "now take a little warm coffee, and then we'll see what can be done. What are you going to America for, my love?"

"I don't know," said Bessie vacantly; "I have given you the money, have I not?"

“Yes, dear,” said the woman kindly, “have you no friends here in Maryport?”

“No,” said Bessie, shaking her head, and looking at the woman with a bewildered gaze—“no, I have not; but Richard has.”

“Oh, Richard has,” said the woman, untying Bessie’s bonnet-strings; “and who is Richard?”

Bessie shook her head again, and leaned back in the chair.

“Where do your parents live?” the woman asked, taking off Bessie’s bonnet and putting it, with her shawl, on an old-fashioned sofa, beneath shelves full of glasses, and jugs, and pewter cups.

“I have none,” said Bessie faintly; “Richard has, but he does not—” and the poor young creature fainted again, and was carried up-stairs by the landlady and the bar-woman.

They put her to bed, and lighted a fire in the room, and sent for a doctor;

and the next night a man came, with a small box, like a doll's coffin, and went away to deposit a still-born infant in the parish churchyard.

Meanwhile, through the arrival of Mr Beachstone (who had traced Bessie, by means of the police, and who had gone back to Helswick shocked and disgusted with her dreadful misconduct), the people at the inn had found out Mrs Grey, who came and sat beside the bed upon which Bessie was lying.

Richard's mother was not, however, so kind to the girl as might have been expected. She read her son's letter, which had been found crumpled up in Bessie's pocket, and she blamed her son much less than she blamed Bessie Martin. But it mattered little to Bessie who blamed her; for she lay there, oblivious to all that was going on around her. She seldom opened her lips, but sometimes she smiled and looked so happy, and so peaceful, that the landlady

of the inn could not help sitting down and crying; at which times Mrs Grey would also exhibit sympathetic symptoms, but she managed to cough her tears away, as she went about the room preparing some cooling drink, or administering the invalid's medicine.

Sometimes Bessie's happy smile would change to one of intense sadness, and then the tears would start into her eyes. Once she frowned and evinced signs of great indignation, and clenched her hand—the hand in which she had clutched the cruel letter.

She was insensible for many days, and then she gradually recovered.

When she was well enough to recognize Mrs Grey, she evinced great repugnance towards her, and cried out, "Take her away, take her away." This brought the tears into Mrs Grey's eyes; but nothing could reconcile Bessie to Richard's mother. She clung to the landlady of the house, who bathed her cheeks and soothed

her; and Mrs Grey used all sorts of womanly wiles to overcome Bessie's dislike; but the unhappy girl never gave way for a moment.

"Go, go, go away; I hate you, and all your house," she said at last, raising her feeble arm, and making her malediction sadly solemn and touching—"I hate you all."

Mrs Grey took the advice of her son Frank, who suggested various schemes for Bessie's benefit; but as Bessie grew stronger, she was more resolute in her determination to have nothing to do with Mrs Grey. Frank sent a sum of money to the landlady, with strict injunctions that she should take care of Bessie, and with a view to obtaining a situation for her.

When the invalid was well enough to walk about the room, the kind-hearted woman made many overtures to her, concerning the Greys; but Bessie scorned them all, and said the very name was hateful to her.

Then she would not go to America now? the landlady asked.

"No, not now," said Bessie, "not now."

"What will you do then, my poor child?" asked the woman of the inn.

"Do! I don't know, I don't care," said Bessie, gazing out through the window at the shipping.

"Don't care is a bad master," said the landlady.

"Is it?" Bessie asked, with a vague smile.

"A shocking bad master, my love—it has been the ruin of thousands."

"What has 'I do care' then done?—What has 'I love' done,—have they ruined thousands?"

"Oh, you ask such strange questions. I never saw any one put themselves in such a state of mind as you," said the landlady coaxingly. "You mustn't give way so, you must cheer up."

Bessie nodded her head, and swayed

herself to and fro, as she watched the steamers in the great basin.

"I say you must have better heart in your troubles, my dear," said the woman, putting her arm round Bessie's waist.

"Yes," said Bessie, as if answering her own question. "I am very much altered, am I not?"

"No; I don't think so, my love."

"O, yes, I am—very, very much—it seems as if there was no Bessie Martin; no Richard Grey; no Helswick; no May-flowers; no sunshine," she said sorrowfully, adding in a careless tone—"never mind, I don't care,—it will be all as one some day."

Bessie Martin was indeed changed. The soft expression of her eye was gone, and in its place there was a quick, restless, flashing, dangerous beauty. The roundness of her features was gone; but there was a delicate sharpness left, that showed off, to advantage, her well-shaped nose, her arched brows, and the graceful line of her upper lip.

There was a little shade of pink mingling with the darkly pale hues of her cheek, and her hair hung about her temples, in heavy raven folds. There was a carelessness in all she said concerning her future, an utter abandonment of all plan or purpose, which troubled the woman of the inn, and cost her some sleepless nights. So much indeed did she trouble about Bessie that her husband had sworn the girl should stay no longer under his roof. Sympathy, and all that, was very well in its way; but the house had been upset quite enough, and he would not be humbugged any longer. He couldn't afford to have his wife's health broken down, and he wouldn't.

Luckily, Bessie did not hear the landlord's vows, and the landlady said nothing about them, and thought nothing of them, knowing that as soon as her husband's passion was over, his words were always considered null and void. But by and by Bessie said she was well enough to leave, and should go.

“Go, where? where shall you go?” asked the woman of the inn.

“It doesn’t matter where I go. Who cares where I go?”

“I care, my poor child,” said the woman.

“Yes, thank you, very much, very much,” said Bessie, kissing the landlady’s fat round hand; “you have been very kind to me, I shall never forget it; but it is not fit that I should stay here, remembering what I am. No, I must go, and you will not be unhappy soon; you have only known me a few weeks. I knew him (and her face darkened) when I was a child; he told me only last May that he loved me better than all the world, and now you see what I am.”

“Do not take it so to heart; you are both young yet,—he may atone,” said the woman.

“No, it’s all over—I am not the Bessie Martin I used to be—I am a different being altogether; it is no good any one talking

to me ; I shall go my own way ; where I go, or what I do, is a matter of utter indifference to me ;” and the bright eyes flashed and the lips were closed, and she swung her arm defiantly.

She was not the Bessie Martin of old, most truly. The change was indeed complete ; it was a change of appearance, of feeling, of nature ; and often the vacant look, which had indicated the vacant mind for many days, in the sick chamber, would come back to the dark face, and then the woman of the house could get nothing from her, but a vacant, empty laugh, or a few tears.

One afternoon Bessie slipped out unknown to any one ; but returned in the evening. A few days afterwards she disappeared at night, and did not return. The landlady of the Maryport Arms set men to search for her. Frank Grey secured the services of a detective officer ; but all search proved fruitless. She had left behind her Richard’s letter, and the bill for

three pounds, torn to shreds and scattered about her bed-room; and on a slip of paper lying beside a plain gold ring (on which was engraven, "Bessie") was written: "Mrs Robinson, Maryport Arms; wear this for my sake. God bless and reward you!"

CHAPTER VI.

SUMMERDALE.

SUMMERDALE was a fair inland village, a hundred miles from the sea. It was a moss-grown, slumbering, picturesque place, which had stood aside and let the great world pass by it. Even the swallows, which came there every year, had partaken somewhat of the local indolence, and did not trouble to rebuild the nests, which they occupied family after family.

The houses were built in an irregular square, with stragglers running off, into a couple of dreamy streets, at right angles.

In the centre of the square stood a pair of tall elms, between which reposed the village stocks, that were still used for the one or two drunkards who occasionally

made themselves too obnoxious for toleration.

Outside the square was the village church and parsonage, both gray with years and green with ivy.

On the border of the churchyard lay a long strip of river, just near enough for the church to image itself in the water, making the river look deep and mysterious. A clump of water lilies slumbered on the limpid blue, and nodded to each other, whenever the wind moved them.

Besides the church and parsonage, Summerdale had several other public buildings—a police station (two rooms in the parish constable's house), a dissenting chapel, and a school-house. Like the cottages, these were thatched, and aged, and warm. The outer beams were shown in the outer plaster, and there were ledges over the door-ways, and flowers everywhere.

They were mostly an old race of people at Summerdale, gray and moss-grown like their houses. On summer evenings they

stood in their doorways, or sat outside the ale-house on forms placed beneath the bow windows. The children were happy contrasts to the old people—bright, and fresh, and sweet, like the roses and clematis and woodbine that bloomed over door-ways, and beneath windows.

Paul Massey had found out this place through the works of an artist, who had wandered thither, and made sketches, to the infinite wonder of the villagers. The limner had painted the river with the church-shadow in it, and the water-lilies; he had drawn the twin elms, with the worm-eaten stocks beneath them, and a group, such as Goldsmith has described in "Lovely Auburn," dancing on the green; he had indicated the church porch, and the parsonage in the trees, with the sun setting upon them; he had done a vignette in the churchyard, with some lines from Grey's *Elegy* written beneath, to add greater force of beautiful sadness to the picture; he had painted a peaceful moonlight scene at the

outskirts of the village, showing the quiet old houses nestling together ; and he had done another view, on a calm summer night, with the blue smoke ascending from the old stunted chimneys.

On a little holiday tour, Paul had brought his wife and daughter to this quiet happy place, and after certain necessary negotiations, had taken an old house that had been empty for several years : it had not been unoccupied sufficiently long to earn for itself the character of being haunted ; but the children had begun to look suspiciously upon it, and had thrown sundry stones through the windows.

A good old family had died out in the good old house, and as it was one of the most important residences in Summerdale, the villagers were glad to see it once more occupied. It was a house of the Elizabethan period, chiefly built of oak, and such as you will see in many parts of Worcestershire and Warwickshire. All the windows projected, and were filled with small

squares of glass. The front door was ponderous and heavy, and opened into a large square hall, from which the ground-floor rooms branched off on either hand. The roof rose in three separate pointed angles, with a pigeon-cote in the centre one. There was a pleasant garden in front, and an orchard behind, with crooked apple-trees in it that bore big red gnarled-looking fruit.

Mrs Massey liked the house much, and when Paul had left Denby Rise, they came to Summerdale, and settled down, in peace. The white-haired vicar had visited them; and the principal residents in the village square had waited upon them, as a deputation from the rest, welcoming them to Summerdale, and wishing them long life and happiness. The four bells in the church tower had been rung in their honour, and Mrs Massey was delighted with the kind attentions that were paid to her.

The little excitement which their arrival

had occasioned, however, soon subsided, and Summerdale once more assumed its old quiet. The villagers had ceased to stare at Kate Massey in church, and to wonder at the cost of her beautiful dress with its ermine trimming, and its sash with the golden buckle.

When they were ill, the old women soon grew into the habit of looking for Mrs Massey's visits; and the old men accustomed themselves to count on Paul's good advice and practical help, in cases of need. The rector said the Masseys had relieved him of half of his parochial duties, and the village schoolmaster almost daily acknowledged Paul's valuable assistance.

Mrs Massey was happy in this sunny Summerdale, and Paul tried to be so. They read together the books in which Uncle Mountford had delighted. They pursued together the same studies. In twelve months there was scarcely a flower, or fern, or moss, or leaf around Summer-

dale with which they had not made themselves acquainted. Then there was Anna's harp, and her favourite piano, which made such music in Summerdale as had never been heard there before. Paul Massey cultivated and produced flowers that astonished and delighted everybody. Little Kate Massey scoured the fields on a Welsh pony, and was the heroine of all the boys and girls in Summerdale; she was their princess, their constant wonder. She had a pair of merry grey eyes, and long auburn curls. Her laugh was soul-stirring, so fresh was it and so musical; and her mother was never tired of her girlish prattle.

Everybody has his own ideas of happiness; but there are not a few who will acknowledge, that to be comparatively "well off" in such a place as Summerdale, is a high type of happiness. To possess a cultivated intellect, and the means of using it peacefully, in a quiet retired inland village, where you may ramble amongst flowers in

the day-time, and spend your evenings with Shakespeare, and Spenser, and Homer, and Goethe, and Moliere, and Scott, and Tennyson, and Thackeray, and Charles Dickens, in company with a wife who can enter into your thoughts and share your happiness; to make yourself valuable to the small community, and be their mentor, their succour in time of need; to know that you are mentioned in the prayers of all those about you; and to be enabled, two or three times in a year, to go off into the bustle, and whirl, and hurry, and bad breath of some big city, in order that you may come home again to appreciate your perfect peace there all the more.

Is not this happiness? To one who has seen the world, most surely. To a well-regulated mind, most certainly. To be the wife, ministering to all these joys, and playing the second part to her husband faithfully and fondly, was happiness indeed to Mrs Massey. But the sad shadow, which Paul could not always conceal from

her, would have its influence upon her, and set her wondering if Paul were really happy; and if he were not, whether she did all that a wife and mother could do. For Paul was not happy. Paul never would be happy again. He was resigned, he was penitent; he had learnt to pray too, but not for himself—for her, for them, for that affectionate wife and that dear child. What a change love and a disturbed conscience had wrought in that Paul Massey of old—that Paul Massey, the chivalrous, the merry!

Sometimes Paul felt that he would be happier in a large town—in London, for instance, where people can lose themselves amongst great crowds. But he could live cheaper at Summerdale, and that was a consideration now; for Winford Barns had very seriously diminished the noble fortune of which Paul was master, when Miss Lee's patrimony had mingled with his own.

“We have never heard anything of poor Joe Wittle,” said Mrs Massey, sitting over some wool work, one evening, whilst Paul was smoking a cigar at the open window.

“No,” said Paul, “and I rather miss the fellow too.”

“I believe he was thoroughly devoted to us, Kate, would you not like to see Joe?”

“I should, Ma, very much,” said Kate, a girl of about twelve years, who was sitting beside her father.

Paul patted her head, and smiled.

“It was rather strange his insisting upon leaving us; we might have kept Joe. Poor fellow, I suppose he thought he might be a burthen to us. ‘No, sir,’ he said, when I pressed him, ‘you may see me again; but at present, I shall rather leave, more particularly as Harkaway is to go with the rest.’”

“Poor Harkaway! But we must not

regret, Paul. Who can regret in this beautiful place?"

Anna could not smother a little sigh for Helswick, notwithstanding.

"Joe Wittle said he would bring me something from foreign parts, Pa, when he bade me good-bye," said Kate.

"Did he, my love? then he will, some day, you may depend," said Paul, leaning a little forward to wave his hand to some one who had entered the garden.

"Who is it, my dear?" asked Mrs Massey.

"Only Anthony Evans," said Paul, and as he said so, a masculine, weather-beaten man came up to the window.

"Good evening, Anthony," said Paul.

"Good evening, sir, a beautiful evening," said Anthony; "how's the good lady, sir?"

"Very well, thank you," said Paul; "but come in, and she shall answer for herself."

Anthony went in accordingly. He was a man of about five and forty, well-dressed, but evidently one who had sprung from the working order. He had an intelligent, open countenance, that was tanned with toil and travel. He wore a thick cloth coat, and brown waistcoat and trowsers, and looked what he really was—a man, who had emigrated to the colonies as a mechanic, and had made money. He had been away from England more than twenty years, and had returned, he said, more out of curiosity than anything else, having no ties in his own country, and but few pleasant remembrances of it.

“And what really brought you to this out-of-the-way place?” asked Mrs Massey, after Anthony Evans had sat down, and put his hat under the chair.

“Well, you see, I came home with a man who belonged to these parts, and we had to pass through this village, ma’am.”

“Yes,” said Mrs Massey, noticing some little hesitation in Anthony’s manner.

“It was a fortnight after your arrival here,” said Anthony, hesitating again.

“Yes,” said Mrs Massey.

“Really, my dear, are you not too inquisitive?” said Paul, smiling affectionately upon his wife.

“Mr Evans will tell me if I am; will you not?”

“Oh, it’s not at all inquisitive,” said Anthony. “To tell you the truth, Mrs Massey, I have often wished to talk to you about this.”

“I am so glad to hear you say so,” said Mrs Massey, laying down her wool work.

“You see we stopped at the ‘Crown’—the ale-house, you know, in the village,—the man and me,—and they were talking of you and Mr Massey there.”

Paul suddenly became very much interested in the conversation.

“Yes,” said Mrs Massey, nodding pleasantly.

“They were saying how good you

seemed to be, and what a capital thing it was for the village that the old house was let. Somebody asked where you were coming from, and the parish constable said from a place called Helswick."

Paul felt afraid of the conversation; he had no reason to be afraid, but his conscience troubled him at the strangest times.

"And, you see, I once knew Helswick," Anthony went on, stammering a little, and fidgeting with his foot.

"Oh, I am so glad," said Mrs Massey; "but," suddenly changing her tone, "you would know it before I did."

"Yes, ma'am," said Anthony, "a good many years ago;" and there was something very sad in the way in which he said "a good many years ago," as though there were dear memories and associations attached to those years that were gone.

Paul Massey breathed again freely, and relighted his cigar.

"Did you know Denby Rise?" Mrs

Massey asked, "the house in the valley beyond Helswick."

"Know it, ma'am," said Anthony, with ill-disguised emotion, "I put every window sash into it."

Then Anthony, pausing suddenly, as if he had said more than he intended, turned the conversation to Helswick again.

"A nice pleasant town Helswick," he said.

"Yes; but, dear me, how strange that you should have helped to build—I suppose that is what you mean, Mr Anthony?—that you should have helped to build Denby Rise."

Anthony made no reply.

"Why, I thought Denby Rise was much older than that," said Paul Massey, for the mere purpose of saying something.

"No," said Anthony.

"Then you must be much older than you look," said Paul.

"I am, oh yes, no doubt," said Anthony, as though the fact of his being older

than he looked was a great relief, and a subject for particular congratulation.

“You have worn well, Mr Evans; I hope I may wear as well,” said Paul.

“And you know Helswick well, of course?” said Mrs Massey, leading the conversation back again.

“Every corner of it,” said Anthony.

“The fall, over the rocks?”

“I’ve played in several cricket matches there, Mrs Massey.”

“The valley above Denby Rise?”

“Oh, yes; I have walked hundreds of times by the brook there, when—”

Anthony paused, and hesitated. Again he had been going to say more than, upon consideration, he thought judicious; which did not escape Mrs Massey’s notice.

“Yes—when?” she said, endeavouring to lead him on; and with a little show of inquisitiveness, Paul Massey thought.

“When I was working at Denby Rise,” Anthony replied; but that was not what he had originally intended to say.

“You know the caverns, of course?” said Mrs Massey, interrogatively.

“All of them,” said Mr Evans, “and I’ve heard the sea beating into them, and heard the gurgle of that brook thousands of miles away: I shall never forget a sight or a sound belonging to Helswick.”

Then there was a short pause, which was again broken by Mrs Massey.

“If I seem inquisitive, Mr Evans, you must really forgive me; but you have awakened my interest, and I thought you were going to tell us why you selected Summerdale for a residence during your stay in England,” said Anna.

“Didn’t I tell you, ma’am? Oh, no, not exactly. Well, you see I had nowhere to go in particular, and when I heard you were from Helswick, it sounded a little bit home-like, and I thought I’d stop here, and perhaps I might get to know Mr Massey, and we might talk about Helswick.”

“And how did we make each other’s acquaintance?” Mr Massey asked.

“Well, you see I thought I’d just pass the time of day.”

“Oh yes, I remember,” said Paul.

“And we got talking, and I told you about my travels, and you were good enough to invite me here,” said Mr Evans.

“And right glad I am to see you,” said Paul, “or any one else who makes Summerdale his home.”

Then the conversation became general as to the beauties of Helswick, and the coast. Anthony Evans was enthusiastic in his references to the caverns, and the fells, and the old ruins. But he sighed now and then, and it was evident that talking of Helswick was as painful to him as it was pleasant.

“Then you have not seen your native place since your return?” said Mrs Massey inquiringly.

“Yes, it was my native place,” said Anthony Evans, as if rather in response to his own thoughts than in reply to Mrs

Massey. "I was born in a little cottage not far from the church, ma'am; but I was apprenticed in Maryport."

"And you have not seen Helswick since you came back to England?" said Paul, repeating his wife's inquiry.

"No—I would rather talk of it than see it," Anthony replied; "I don't think I could bear to see it."

Mrs Massey, noticing that there was a hidden sorrow which was being touched, now endeavoured to divert Mr Evans' thoughts from Helswick, and to her relief tea was brought in, as was customary at eight o'clock. But Anthony Evans would not accept her invitation to partake of it; he said he would much rather be excused that evening; he should take a walk in the fields, and return to his lodgings.

"Look in again, then," said Mr Massey, "whenever you feel inclined."

"Thank you, I am much obliged," said Anthony, taking up his hat, and strid-

ing forth into the hall and out into the garden.

Mrs Massey watched his retreating form, and said: "I pity that man, Paul; I am sure he is troubled with the memory of some great grief: he is what the world would call a rough, ordinary mortal, I suppose, Paul, without much feeling too."

"The world, love, is a very bad judge of people," said Paul.

"How happy are we," said Anna, "who care nothing for the world and its judgment."

"You are happy, Anna; are you not?"

"Very, very happy," Anna replied.

"And Katy, what says Katy? Why, she has gone to sleep."

"And it is sufficient to look upon her face to see how happy *she* is," said Anna.

And thus they chatted on, whilst the tea urn hissed upon the table, and the lamp-light glimmered on the oak wainscoting, on

the old-fashioned fire-place (where no fire was needed on this summer evening), on the tall bronzes above the mantel-shelf, on the favourite harp, on the water-colour drawings and oil paintings, and on the happy face of the child asleep.

CHAPTER VII.

THE STRANGER.

ANTHONY EVANS became a frequent visitor at Oak House, and was always heartily welcomed there. His intimacy with the Masseys had increased his importance in Summerdale, and his plain unassuming ways, coupled with his pecuniary liberality, soon made him a general favourite.

But Summerdale wondered greatly at Anthony Evans. Summerdale leaned over its half-doorways and watched him to and fro. Summerdale received his nods and kindly-sad salutations with becoming deference. Summerdale smoked its pipe, and shook its head, and said Master Evans had seen the world ; had been in foreign lands,

where there were savages and kangaroos, and whales, and gold, and all sorts of things.

The old rector would talk to Anthony at street corners, about distant countries; and his Reverence had even been known to sit down in the Crown bar, and listen to the same stories which Anthony had related in the smoke-room. But he was a sorrowful man was Anthony; even the villagers could see that.

Mrs Massey often thought that poor Anthony had a secret grief of which it would be happiness for him to unburthen himself; and, as if a fellow-feeling had strengthened the friendship which Paul felt towards this man, Paul would sometimes become quite sorrow-stricken over the imaginary griefs which Anna conjured up as Anthony's afflictions.

"I shall go and take a peep at Helsingwick one of these days," said Anthony, in a conversation which had sprung up between Mrs Massey and himself and Paul,

on a casual afternoon meeting in the meadows outside Summerdale.

"It will look beautiful on such a day as this," said Mrs Massey, watching Katy gathering flowers which had been cut down amongst the newly mown grass.

"It was always beautiful when I knew it," said Anthony, his rough weather-beaten face lighting up with the memory of other days.

"The sea is not so clear and green anywhere as it is off Denby," said Anna; "you may see the gravel at the bottom in some of the deepest spots." Then suddenly turning to Paul, who had been unwell for many days, Anna said: "You are ill, Paul; how pale you are!"

"No, no," said Paul, smiling a sickly fictitious smile, "the scent of the hay and the flowers we have gathered seems unusually oppressive; all right, love, I am better now."

"You must really have advice, dear," said Anna anxiously; "you have never been

thoroughly yourself, Paul, since you had that dreadful attack at Denby, years ago."

"Never mind me, Mr Evans," said Paul, taking his wife's arm and putting it through his own. "You were talking of Helswick?"

"Yes, I was saying that I should just take a peep, and then go back to Australia."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Paul, "I had hoped we should have you as a permanent resident at Summerdale; we shall miss you when you are gone,—I can hardly say how much."

"That we shall," said Mrs Massey.

"You are very kind to say so," said Anthony, and they went wandering on by the river.

In the evening Mrs Massey, who had thought a great deal about Anthony, and had, in a vague speculative manner, mixed him up with Mrs Grey's story, said: "Paul, I believe I know more about Mr Evans than he imagines."

“Indeed!” said Paul. “In what way?”

“You know how curious I have been about his early life at Helswick?”

“Yes, my love.”

“How often I have troubled you with my fancies about it?”

“It is never a trouble to hear of your thoughts, Anna,” said Paul.

“But I know I have said so much about the poor man,” said Anna, “I pity him so much.”

“It is a bitter thing to suffer from a secret grief,” said Paul, feeling deeply the truth of his assertion.

Anna set down the earnestness with which Paul said this, to her husband’s kind sympathy with Anthony Evans.

“You remember Mrs Grey at Helswick, Paul?”

“Grey?” said Paul doubtfully.

“Uncle’s housekeeper, who was your nurse, after that dreadful shipwreck.”

“Yes, yes; how ungrateful to forget her for a moment,” said Paul.

“ You have heard her story—I think I told it to you.”

“ Something about her husband leaving her shortly after their marriage ? ”

“ Yes,” said Anna, “ and I believe this Anthony Evans to be her husband.”

“ Indeed ! ” said Paul, becoming interested, and forgetting for the moment his own secret sorrow.

“ Yes ; I am almost sure he is.”

“ And wherefore ? His name is Evans.”

“ It is assumed. Her husband was a carpenter. Do you not remember how he started when he inadvertently told us that he put the window-sashes into Denby Rise ? ”

“ But he is not the kind of man who would desert a woman,” said Paul.

“ I should say he is one who would have been an affectionate and good husband,” said Anna. “ There must have been some foul play ; some cruel slander. The poor woman never knew why he left her ; but she said he would return, and I

am sure she loved him with all her heart. He was led to believe some wicked libel upon her. The fact that he left behind him, as I remember she told me, all the money he had, showed that the man was not naturally unkind. It must be he, Paul—I am almost sure of it.”

“And suppose it is?” said Paul.

“We must be sure before we act, love.”

“And when we are sure?”

“Mrs Grey must be communicated with.”

“Where is Mrs Grey? Still in Maryport?”

“Yes, with her two sons—the eldest I am told a very fine fellow in every respect. Poor Harry Thornhill introduced him into his business house.”

Paul winced at the well-known name, and remained silent.

“I must talk to him about Mrs Grey, Paul. What do you think?”

“I will not advise you,” said Paul;

“whatever your heart dictates will be right.”

A week had not elapsed ere Mrs Massey, after repeated attempts, succeeded in bringing Mr Evans to talk more of Helswick, and Helswick people.

Paul, who had been unwell during the day, was walking in the garden, smoking, and answering the curious questions of his daughter, who was growing more and more like her mamma.

Anthony Evans was in the dining-room talking to Mrs Massey.

“And when do you think of going to Helswick?” said Mrs Massey.

“I have not decided,” said Anthony mournfully; “I sometimes think I will not go at all.”

Anna was almost timidly anxious not to hurt their visitor’s feelings; but she was fully bent upon satisfying herself as to his relationship to Mrs Grey, feeling assured, in her own mind, that a mutual expla-

nation would settle the long estrangement.

“Did you know—” began Anna, her heart beating quickly, “did you know a person named Grey, at Helswick?”

Anthony’s dark face flushed, and he hesitated.

“Sarah Grey?” said Anna, looking earnestly at him.

“Yes,” said Anthony faintly, “I did.”

Anna was sure that that “yes” came from George Grey.

“She was such a good woman,” Mrs Massey went on—“such a kind soul.”

Anthony moved nervously in his chair.

“I knew her for many years. There was a sad story connected with her early life.”

Anthony trembled, and said nothing.

“Through some unexplained cause—through some base calumny, no doubt—her husband deserted her. Poor thing! it was a dreadful grief to her; and yet, like a woman, she went on loving him and praying that he would come back.”

"She was false to him!—False!" exclaimed Anthony.

"Then you knew her," said Anna, quickly.

"Pardon me, madam—it is a painful subject," said Anthony, calmer for his passionate exclamation.

"I am sure she was a true good woman; I dare be sworn she was," said Anna, not heeding Anthony's agitation. "I saw her every day for years; a more conscientious kind creature did not exist; nor a more affectionate mother."

"Mrs Massey, Mrs Massey, pray say no more—your words are like daggers," said Anthony with quivering lips.

"Then you are not Anthony Evans," said Anna, rising, "but—"

"George Grey," said the wretched man, covering his face with his hands.

"Oh, dear, dear," exclaimed Kate, running into the room, "Pa is so ill."

Mrs Massey was in the garden in a

moment. She found her husband, pale and speechless, leaning against a tree.

“Paul ! Paul !” she exclaimed in agony, taking him by the arm.

But there was no response. In another moment, however, Paul’s lips moved, and he attempted to walk.

“Paul, my husband !” exclaimed Anna.

“Don’t be alarmed,” said Paul with difficulty, “I shall be better presently.”

“Heaven send he may !” said Anna, fervently.

“Dear papa,” murmured Kate, taking his other hand and kissing it.

“Let us go into the house,” said Paul faintly, and he walked, with tottering steps, between his wife and daughter.

Anthony Evans, or George Grey, as we had better now call him, only partially recovered from his sudden surprise and emotion, met them at the door, and assisted Mr Massey to a chair.

By and by, Paul recovered, and was quite himself again, with the exception of

being a shade paler. He did not know what had seized him; how he came to be so suddenly ill: it happened in a moment.

“I am all right again,” he said, after a time, in answer to his visitor. “No, thank you, I will not trouble the doctor—there is no need.”

“Can I do anything for you, anything at all?” said the newly discovered Grey.

“No, thank you,” said Paul.

“Or for you, Mrs Massey?” he asked, in a subdued tone.

“No, thank you,” said Anna, “you must hear what I have to say another day.”

“I will,” said the man. “Good night, ma’am; good night, sir;” said Mr Grey; “and good night, Miss Kate—take care of papa.”

It was a beautiful July evening. The moon was just rising over the quiet thatched town. The chestnut trees and the limes on the outskirts of the moss-

grown old place, were in full flower ; and the scent of the new blossoms mingled with the odour of garden flowers. It was only nine o'clock, and yet the people were nearly all a-bed.

George Grey wandered down the quiet streets, and thought of the events of the night, and of days long, long ago. He had loved his wife fervently ; but, like many another husband, not sufficiently to believe in her above everybody else, and to defy calumny and scandal.

A doubt of the truth of her shame had never occurred to him until this night. For a moment it had wrung his heart ; but only for a moment. He set down the good religious life, which Mrs Massey had described, to penitence and remorse. But he could not help feeling as he passed along the quiet streets, what a terrible loss was his ; what a broken, wretched life. Money he had in abundance. What was money to him ? One of those poor thatched cottages with a true, kind wife, and with chil-

dren to love, would, to George, have been greater happiness than anything in the world. Like the best of his order, he yearned for the domestic sweets of the English hearth ; but better solitude, better misery, better death, than a home with the blight of dishonour upon it.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PAINFUL DISCOVERY.

THEY had gathered in the hay around Summerdale; the hops, far away beyond the church, had been pruned; the bream and the tench had spawned in the river, the grayling had made havoc amongst the flies; and the old town of Summerdale slumbered on. So slowly and yet so swiftly did time pass away, that the ripening of the corn followed, and the gathering in of the crops, and the browning of the leaves, and the falling of the apples, ere it was hardly remembered that the hay was stacked. In truth the seasons came and went so silently and so gradually that Summerdale hardly noticed the transitions.

Paul Massey's health had not improved.

Indeed his condition had caused Mrs Massey so much uneasiness, that she had induced Paul to go to London and obtain advice. She had accompanied him thither, in the early part of the autumn; and all that the great man whom Paul consulted had said to Mrs Massey, after his private interview with Paul, was that her husband must not be over-anxious about anything, must not study too much, or work too hard: it would be good for him to travel.

This was inexplicable to Mrs Massey, but Paul said it was the custom of the profession to exaggerate the ailments of their patients.

“I sometimes think you conceal some great trouble from me,” Anna said afterwards.

“No, no, Anna, do not think so.”

“Then why should you be cautioned so seriously about being over-anxious, and not taxing yourself too much with study? Why, Paul dear, should the doctor speak as though you were wearing your-

self out in some arduous business which afflicts both mind and body ? ”

It was very unusual for Anna to question Paul so directly, but this time she would not be put off by mere evasion.

“It is nothing, Anna,” Paul said, “nothing.”

“Paul, dear Paul, I know you would only deceive me through your great love for me ; but the husband should make the wife a full sharer in his sorrows as well as his joys. The woman is deprived of half her mission, of the best part of her wifely duties, if the husband do not avail himself of her sympathy and assistance in the hour of trouble.”

“Do you think the husband who compels his wife to share in all his anxieties and cares, and in all the petty annoyances to which he is subject, a really affectionate husband ? ”

“If he lets the wife into a share of his happiness, I do.”

“*I* do not,” said Paul, decidedly.

“Then there is something which you conceal from me,” said Anna, a little reproachfully.

“No, Anna, you are mistaken. I have said so before,” Paul replied. “Let us change the subject; I shall soon be better.”

This was not the first falsehood that Paul had felt himself compelled to utter, to hedge in that secret which, at times, almost threatened to break its prison, and proclaim itself to all the world.

On their return to Summerdale, almost the first question, after Kate had been kissed, was concerning Mr Evans. Anna’s account of her interview with that gentleman had greatly interested her husband.

Kate said Mr Evans had not called during the three days they had been in London; and she had learnt from the gardener that he had left Summerdale.

Both Paul and his wife very much regretted this.

Anna said Mr Evans would be sure to return; and she was right.

In the course of a fortnight he came back again. The trees were stripped of nearly all their leaves ; and a bright fire was leaping up the big dining-room chimney of Oak House. Paul was playing chess with his wife, and Kate, with her long brown hair hanging about her white shoulders, was looking on.

A knock at the door startled them ; but they were all glad to receive Mr Evans, for he was a pleasant companion, and his history, as you know, was deeply interesting to the Masseys.

“ We are very glad to see you again,” said Anna.

“ Welcome back to Summerdale, mister truant,” said Paul, heartily.

“ Did you think I should not return ? ” George asked.

“ Oh, no,” was Anna’s quick reply.

Mr Grey sat down ; the chessmen were put aside ; wine and spirits were brought forth ; and a pleasant chat commenced. The truant soon told them that he had

been to Helswick, and that he did not find it much altered.

When Kate had gathered up her wealth of hair, and gone to bed, Mr Grey said to Paul he supposed Mrs Massey had told him about her discovery. Paul confessed that she had, and said how greatly it had surprised him.

To talk about Helswick seemed now a greater relief than ever to George Grey. He told them of every well-known spot, and of the few changes which had taken place. He had heard of his sons, he said, and of his wife, though nobody knew him again. It was a bitter lot his, he said; but it was some comfort to know that those whom he left behind him had prospered—that they had not known want. The thought that they might have done so had cost him many a weary, sleepless night, when he was far away. He was glad she had not suffered, in a worldly sense; a bad conscience was a sufficient punishment to any guilty soul.

How everybody and everything told Paul of his terrible crime! It seemed as if nothing could take place, as if a dozen words could not be spoken, without his guilt being alluded to, in covert bitterness.

Mrs Massey said she was glad Mr Grey had come home in a more settled state of mind.

"Yes," he said, "I shall go back a happier man,"

"Go back, where?" said Anna.

"To Melbourne."

"And when?"

"In the spring."

"But suppose you were to discover that your wife was not guilty," said Anna.

"Ah, it is useless to attempt to buoy me up with false hopes. The proofs were too strong. No, Mrs Massey, I am better contented now. She is living in comfort, and with her sons."

Anna made a memorandum in her mind to make a trip to Maryport; but in-

creased anxieties concerning her husband postponed the intended journey.

Whilst they were talking so cosily round the blazing fire, the wind rose, and blew gustily about the old house, and Paul thought of the sea, as he always did when the wind was high. It blew the elms about in the Summerdale Square, and the old stocks creaked and groaned, as George Grey passed them, on his way home.

The wind blew loudly elsewhere, and at Maryport, amongst other places—screaming amongst the shipping, and shaking the houses.

Indeed, the same wind which troubled Paul Massey, and which rumbled in the chimney of the low, old-fashioned room in which George Grey was fast asleep and dreaming of Helswick, shook the window of the little dining-room, at Purdown, where Frank Grey and his mother were quietly chatting, before retiring to bed.

Mrs Grey had become more affection-

ate in her manner towards Frank since the night—long ago now—when she had come home, in tears, from that painful interview with poor Bessie Martin, and of late had said much less about her son Richard than formerly, whatever she might have thought.

“I believe I saw that poor girl the other evening, mother,” said Frank, with his feet upon the fender.

“Bessie?” asked Mrs Grey, with a sigh.

“Yes; but I may be mistaken—I hope I am. There was rather a noisy upper-box, full of men and women, at the theatre, last night—it was the Mayor’s bespeak, as you know—and in the front of the box was a girl that I could not help thinking must be Bessie Martin.”

“Poor thing!” said Mrs Grey, looking into the fire, and waiting for Frank to proceed with his story.

“Her hair was very black, her eye bright and large; in fact, every feature

corresponded with your description, and there was a vague look of indifference, every now and then, which almost convinced me that I was right in my conjecture. Poor soul, I could hardly follow the play for looking at her, and I was rallied about it by a friend who was with me. He little knew my thoughts, mother. How often people are deceived when they think they are amazingly clever."

Mrs Grey sighed, and looked mournfully up at her son. "Poor Bessie!" she said, "I have wished sometimes that she is dead; but I fear, I fear something worse than death."

"I can hear no tidings of Dick," said Frank, after a short pause, "but I dare-say he is all right; he would not have given up his situation, you may depend upon that, mother, unless he had something better to go to; you mustn't trouble about him," Frank continued, cautiously, and like one feeling his way.

“Trouble, Frank! I cannot help it; I have learnt to disguise my feelings of late years, and to check my tongue, but my heart is unchanged, and therefore I cannot help its yearning after your brother. Ah, you don’t know what it is to be a mother!”

“No,” said Frank, and he could not resist a smile, though he went up to his mother and kissed her forehead, “I do not; but I know what it is to love a mother.”

“My dear boy, you have been very kind to me, and I have often behaved ungratefully,” said Mrs Grey, the remembrance of some peevish fits occurring to her. “But you must admit, Frank, that you were a little to blame in your treatment of Richard; you did not think enough about his earlier years, and the thoughts and ideas which he had imbibed from Mat Dunkum.”

“Don’t hesitate, mother—relieve your mind,” said Frank, kindly, when his mother paused and looked doubtfully into his eyes.

“If he were never to write to me again, Frank, if I knew that he hated me, I could forgive him; because I know that his mind has been perverted—the same as the mind of another, who left me when you were children.”

It was useless for Frank to discuss this question with his mother, and he never did. Had he attempted to do so, Mrs Grey would have worked herself up into a denunciation of everybody, including even poor Bessie Martin, as betrayers of her poor son's innocence.

“Well, now I shall say good-night, mother,” said Frank, putting his arm around her.

“That's what you always say when we talk upon this subject; but I do not blame you, my dear boy—good—”

She did not finish the sentence, but exclaimed, “What was that?”

“What, mother?” said Frank, listening.

“That noise.”

“Oh, the wind; why, mother, you are getting nervous.”

“There have been two burglaries in this parish, Frank,” said Mrs Grey, “and this very week.”

“It does not follow that there is to be a third here, mother,” said Frank.

Two hours afterwards Mrs Grey rose from her bed, and drew up her blind. The wind was still boisterous, and two of the adjacent gas lamps were extinguished.

During a momentary lull she thought she heard footsteps in the garden. Then there was a sound below-stairs, as if a bolt was being removed; then a window was opened.

“How nervous I am, to be sure,” she said, “it is but the wind.”

But Mrs Grey could not sleep. There was certainly a noise in the kitchen. She went up to Frank’s room, but Frank was fast asleep, and she did not like to awaken him.

She was no coward, and she determined to go cautiously, by the back way, into the kitchen. Listening at every step, and creeping on in the dark, Mrs Grey at length reached the bottom of the stairs.

A gleam of light flashed out from the kitchen, and then disappeared. A hurried remark was made in a whisper by some person to another, and then came a second flash of light. Mrs Grey was almost petrified with alarm, notwithstanding her courage.

The light came towards her. She stepped aside, concealed by the door, which was pushed open, and two men passed by her. The light shone upon the foremost one, for a moment, and Mrs Grey had nearly screamed aloud.

They ascended the stairs, cautiously, and entered the dining-room. She could hear them overhead; but she did not move. Had they gone further she would have followed, fearing that injury might

befall Frank, whom, for reasons best known to herself, she prayed would continue to sleep.

The minutes were like hours. The quarter of an hour during which the burglars occupied themselves in the rooms above, was like an age to Mrs Grey, as she stood concealed at the foot of the kitchen stairs.

At length footsteps, silent, cautious steps, were heard upon the stairs; the light from the dark lantern flashed again in the kitchen; and in a few minutes more the men were gone.

Mrs Grey came out silently from her hiding-place, and went up-stairs, upon tip-toe, again to Frank's room.

"Thank God!" she said when she found him still asleep; and then she went back to her own room, and crept shivering and trembling into bed.

Cold, cold;—cold at heart, too, the poor woman lay listening to the storm as it increased in anger. She fancied the

wind was chasing her wretched son, running him down in some miserable hovel, or dashing him down in the streets. Then it lightened and thundered, as if the heavens had prepared a bolt to blast him, in the height of his iniquity.

When she rose again and tremblingly drew her blind aside, the first grey streaks of morning were in the sky. The wind rumbled in the chimney, the window shook, the rain was roaring down the spouts, and draining from the eaves, in great heavy drops. The wind was banging the garden door (Mrs Grey knew why the lock was broken), which creaked and wheezed on its crazy hinges, as if it had an asthma. Then it rushed by the window, swinging back the shutter below, and sweeping round the corner with increasing rage, taking a tile off a neighbouring house, and depositing it, with a crash, in an adjoining court.

And now another element joined in the fray. The rain ceased, and in its stead

great round hailstones, in white clouds, went hissing and clattering in every corner, like a storm of shot-corns into doomed rookeries. Away went the hailstones over chimney and house-top. Away they went, helter-skelter before the driving wind, which increased in strength every minute. It whistled round the tottering chimney-pots, until one close by could hold on to bricks and mortar no longer, and went crashing over the tiles, and frightening a muffled-up watchman as much as if it were a burglar. Scarcely had it reached the street, when the lightning again joined in the fray, and the thunder shook the very earth. All the elements were at war with each other.

Mrs Grey did not notice the picturesque beauty of the storm ; but she stood at the window looking out at the opening day, which was in harmony with her own storm-tossed thoughts.

It was a sight for Quasimodo himself,

the birth of this wild, windy day—this day never to be forgotten in the history of the inmates of Tristram Lodge.

Bristling up amongst a host of shining chimney-pots,—some, on the swivel principle, throwing about their great awkward arms as if in very despair,—a hundred gable roofs clustered together under the mysterious morning sky. Loud roared the wind amongst the old timbers. Hail, and snow, and sleet, and rain rushed to and fro in hazy clouds, like affrighted ghosts amongst the gaunt chimney stacks. From roof to roof the gleaming lightning flew, revealing the mysteries of many an old corner, and glaring into a thousand chamber windows on a thousand terrified dreamers. Away clattered a loosened tile, dashing, crashing, clattering, rattling, over the slanting house-tops. The swivel chimney, hard by, turned round its black head with a scream, and the lightning conductor of its taller neighbour trembled like

a reed. But wind, nor rain, nor hail could wipe out the occurrence of a few hours previously.

When the morning had really come, and the robbery was discovered, Mrs Grey said nothing. She was pale, and ill, and like one beside herself; so Frank made as little of the affair as he could. He gave to the police a list of the articles stolen; it included about thirty pounds taken from a bureau in the dining-room, sundry old coins, a dozen of silver spoons, and as many forks, an old-fashioned silver watch, with the initials "G. G." upon the back, and several other minor things of no importance.

A well-known detective officer examined the house and its fastenings, and explained how the thieves had got in as well as if he had seen them. Near the kitchen window, through which they had entered, were several foot-marks, and it was not unlikely, he said, that these marks would prove strong evidence against the

thieves, if the robbers were captured, which it was very likely they would be, and that evening.

“Do you think you will take them so soon?” Mrs Grey inquired, with well-assumed calmness.

“Hard to say,” said the man, looking at her; “not unlikely, rather think we are on the right scent.”

Within an hour afterwards the officer returned with some of the stolen articles; but Frank had gone to business, and Mrs Grey could not identify them. The watch with G. G. engraven upon it was certainly like the one which was missing; but she must decline to swear to it.

“Well, perhaps the master will be able to identify them better,” said the man, noticing Mrs Grey’s agitation. “There’s no need for you to be nervous, marm.”

“I suppose it is necessary that we should swear to them before the thieves can be convicted,” said Mrs Grey.

“Well, it generally is,” said the

officer; "but I'll just fit this boot into the footmarks," he said, taking a boot out of a handkerchief.

Mrs Grey hurried up-stairs, and put on her bonnet and shawl.

"Why some one's been and tampered with them footmarks," said the officer, coming back.

"Tampered with them!" said Mrs Grey, feigning great surprise.

"I must see your servants," said the officer.

Mrs Grey rung the bell, which was answered by a respectable-looking girl.

"Call Mary," said Mrs Grey.

"There, sir, you may question them as you please—I shall be back in a few minutes."

As fast as she could walk, with the wind blowing and hooting at her along the streets, Mrs Grey went to Beckford Square, and saw her son.

Frank was alarmed at her pale face when she entered his room.

“Whatever has happened, mother?—sit down,” he said, closing the door.

“They have taken them—they have been to me to identify the things,” said Mrs Grey, almost gasping for breath. “I would not say they were our things. They will bring them to you: you must not know them—you must say they are not ours.”

“Why, mother? what is the meaning of this?”

“The thieves cannot be convicted unless the goods are identified.”

“But we wish them convicted, mother!”

“You would convict your *brother*!” exclaimed the wretched woman, falling sobbing into her son’s arms.

Mrs Grey had seen the burglars,—they were Richard Grey and Peter Foster.

CHAPTER IX.

MORE TRIALS THAN ONE.

THE next morning the number of slipshod men and women, who lounged about the city gaol of Maryport, to see the "night charges" marched to the police court, was unusually large,—to see the men whom it was supposed had had a hand in several serious burglaries, which for a time had completely baffled the detective capabilities of the police.

It was a bitterly cold day. Snow and sleet and rain were falling, and the wind swept wildly along the streets, chilling everything. But the weather must be bitter indeed that would drive, to their miserable hovels, the class of persons who come

out of back streets and alleys to gaze on criminals.

As the prisoners were brought forth—male and female—some for being drunk, some for brawling, some for thieving, some for stabbing,—they scanned the crowd eagerly, and nearly in every instance found sympathizing faces there.¹

When Richard Grey and Peter Foster came out, heavily hand-cuffed, there was a great rush towards them ; but the two were put into a cab and driven off, and a stout oily-looking rogue, amongst the last batch of prisoners, seemed a little disappointed that he was not to share in this special honour.

Richard Grey had undergone that marked physiognomical change which is inevitably produced by a career of vice. If people would keep their good looks, they must be good. Nature soon sets her seal of infamy upon her infamous children. Richard Grey, the fair-haired, handsome boy of Helswick, with the sanguine blue eyes and florid

complexion, was now a gaunt lout of a fellow, with scowling visage and sensual mouth; a fellow with a lowering brow and dull, heavy, villanous eyes. His features were regular and well-shapen still; but there were lines in his face that had changed the once open expression, and he was indeed so much altered, that his own fond mother would hardly have recognized him.

His companion, who was considerably his senior, had changed but little from the time when we first introduced him to our readers. Peter Foster was always an "ill-favoured fellow." He simply looked older now, and dirtier, added to which he was poorly dressed. Richard Grey, on his return from America some months previously, had casually met him in Liverpool, and they had returned to Maryport together. Peter had long been cast off by his parents, whom he had nearly ruined, and Richard had lived a desperate life on the other side of the Atlantic.

No wonder that these two soon found equally abandoned companions at Keem's. It was during the singing and rioting of this place that they became connected with a band of thieves, who had for some time carried on a successful course of robbery, in various parts of the country. They had friends in several of the principal towns of England, and a constant correspondence was kept up with London.

The police of Maryport (whose chief had been reared in Scotland Yard) had a tolerably fair knowledge of the local criminal population. They knew where to look for certain classes of thieves. They knew the set amongst which burglary was favoured; and they could put their hands almost immediately upon ordinary pickers and stealers. But the new importation troubled them so much that the assistance of a Bow Street runner had been secured.

It was not long ere the London detective scented out Keem's Harmonic Bowers,

of which place, attired as a simple countryman, and with all a simple countryman's manners, he became a regular frequenter. By-and-by he ingratiated himself with Peter Foster and Richard Grey, and was permitted to sit beside the chairman. He said he had come into some money, and as he had no other incumbrances, he had come to spend it, and he should be glad if they would recommend him to a comfortable sort of inn where he could be jolly for a week or so.

The chairman undertook to see the countryman in "a snug crib," and two friends of Foster's and Grey's (the latter's *alias* was Smith, and the former's Banks; but we who know them will give them their proper names) went home with the countryman that night, and had a rare jollification. The countryman soon grew a favourite with his new friends; Jack Crib, the chairman, was particularly fond of him, and, in his cups, said things which the countryman treasured up.

The end was that the Bow Street runner became sufficiently acquainted with the company into which he had ingratiated himself to be satisfied that these were the thieves who had bothered the Maryport police. He found it difficult to communicate many particulars to the chief officer, deeming it advisable never to be out of the society of one or more of the men, seeing that several of them were 'cute London thieves, who were almost as wary as himself. On the night of the robbery at Grey's he began to fear that a new comer, whose face he remembered, had penetrated his disguise ; so he sat up most of the night drinking, and early the next morning, feigning a besotted state of stupidity, he quarrelled with the landlord of the house and went out brawling, which soon induced a policeman to take him to the station-house. Had he disappeared less suspiciously his birds would have flown.

In less than half-an-hour after the countryman had been taken to the station-house,

careful watch was posted throughout the locality, and by dint of good management five of the gang were taken, two being Peter Foster and Richard Grey, and the third the chairman of Keem's Harmonic Bowers, who was discovered to be a receiver on a large scale, and who was—on his own account, we regret to say it—permitted to turn King's Evidence against his patrons.

Thus it was that Richard Grey and Peter Foster were caught, the former with the watch marked G. G. in his possession, and the latter with a newly-made hole in his coat, which a piece of cloth picked up under Grey's window exactly fitted.

By the aid of the oily rogue, Jack Crib, who was transferred from the dock to the witness box, Mrs Grey and her son Frank were spared the necessity of appearing, another case being clearly proved against the prisoners. Two others were remanded, and were, we may state at once, ultimately transported.

The assizes being close at hand, Richard Grey and Peter Foster, after a short examination, were fully committed for trial.

That very week Frank was to have been taken into the firm of Welford and Co., as junior partner; upon the apprehension of his brother, however, he had absented himself from business, and remained at home, giving certain necessary instructions, by letter, with regard to matters requiring attention. Mr Welford had visited him several times, in the kindest way; but Frank persisted that he could not leave home again until the assizes were over at least, and then he had not settled what he might do. Frank kept his word; but at the same time undertook to give any explanation necessary in his department, and attend to all documents that required his attention.

Mr Welford, feeling that it would be best to keep Frank occupied, had all manner of letters, and freight notes, and bills of lading sent up every morning; and the

few days between the committal of the police magistrates and the assizes soon passed away.

On the morning of the trial Mrs Grey insisted upon going to the Court. She had hitherto said little or nothing about Richard; having maintained a painful calmness, which was much worse than a boisterous grief.

All Frank's appeals, against this wish of his mother, were vain. Nothing in the world, she said, should prevent her going to the Court.

After exhausting every argument to induce her to change her determination, after affectionate solicitations and zealous protests, Frank gave way, and when his mother was dressed and ready, he insisted upon going with her.

The December sun was shining upon the whitened roofs of the houses when they left Purdown. The city was going on as it went on every day, except Sunday, when the bells chimed nearly all

day long and the steamers were laid up in the river.

They reached the court as soon as the doors were opened, and took their seats, without a word. By and by eager spectators crowded in, and policemen took up their stations at various points. Lawyers and their clerks seated themselves round the second row of the great table, beneath the bench, and laid down bundles of papers, tied up with red tape, on the shelf which was fastened upon the back of the seat in front of them. Then came barrister's clerks with bags and briefs, and books, which were speedily examined by their masters, in wigs and gowns, who soon filled the seat round the big table. Then the reporters dropped in; and magistrates took their seats on each side of the judge's chair, and ladies were ushered into the galleries above.

Mrs Grey and Frank noticed all this with a dull, blunted gaze, until the trumpets announced the arrival of the judges,

and then Mrs Grey took Frank's hand under her shawl, and Frank felt the blood rush into his cheeks. In a few moments everybody rose, and the judge entered; whereupon the usual prosaic preliminaries of opening the Court were gone through, and as this was the second assize-day (and the day which the weekly newspaper of the preceding evening had stated the cases of burglary would be heard), the spectators had not long to wait before Richard Grey and Peter Foster were placed in the dock.

Mrs Grey squeezed Frank's hand, at sight of her younger son—so altered, so degraded; and the sharp agonizing cry which escaped her lips was immediately drowned in a general cry of "order."

It is unnecessary to describe the trial. The charge against the prisoners was fully made out, and the jury deliberated scarcely five minutes ere they returned their verdict.

"What say you, are the prisoners at

the bar, Richard Grey, *alias* Richard Smith, and Peter Foster, *alias* Peter Banks, guilty or not guilty?" asked the usher in a loud voice.

"Guilty," said the foreman.

Mrs Grey, who had been wrought up to a pitch of great excitement and anxiety, fainted as the verdict was given. Close behind her started up a man in half-sailor, half-landman's costume, who raised her in his arms before Frank Grey had scarcely time to notice what had happened.

The prisoner, Richard Grey, turned his head for a moment in the direction where the commotion had arisen, but the man had cleared his way through the crowd, and was out in the open air in a few moments.

"Thank you, I will relieve you now," said Frank Grey.

"I am stronger than you," said the stranger, looking anxiously at Mrs Grey's pale face.

A chair was brought, and water was

brought; but Mrs Grey only partially recovered.

A medical man who was in Court came out, and advised that Mrs Grey should be taken home, and put to bed; she was suffering from more than mere faintness.

A cab was called accordingly, and Mrs Grey was lifted into it, the stranger taking a seat on the box.

When they reached home, Frank Grey led his mother into the house, and the doctor advised quiet. Mrs Grey continued insensible.

CHAPTER X.

THE MAN ON THE BOX.

WHEN the cab stopped, the man who had carried Mrs Grey out of Court slid down from the box and disappeared.

It was some little time before Frank remembered that he had not behaved quite so courteously as he might have done, under the circumstances, to the man on the box. Truth to tell, Frank would much rather have carried his mother out of Court himself. There was a confident officiousness in the rough stranger's manner which did not please Frank Grey. He was not satisfied with himself, nevertheless, for not having thanked him.

An opportunity for his doing so soon arrived. After walking about the neigh-

bourhood for more than an hour, the man who had rode on the box presented himself at the front door of Tristram Lodge, and asked for Mr Grey.

“Mr Grey is engaged—he cannot see any one to-day,” said the servant.

“Tell him mine is very important business,” said the man, “it concerns his own and his mother’s happiness.”

“Show him in,” at length said Frank, and the man stalked into the trim little room that Frank had furnished, so hopefully, on his mother’s arrival at Pur-down.

“Oh, it’s you, is it?” said Frank. “I am much obliged to you for your kindness this morning.”

As he thanked him, Frank pulled out a purse.

“I want neither thanks nor money, sir,” said the man, holding down his head. “Mine is business connected with neither the one nor the tother.”

“Perhaps you will be good enough to

tell me who you are, then, and explain your business at once."

"May I sit down?" the man asked, dropping, at the same moment, into a chair.

"There is no necessity for ceremony," said Frank, fixing his eyes upon his visitor.

"I don't wonder you have forgotten me," said the man; "I've changed a good deal of late—I was in good feather when you saw me before; but I've gone down since then, and I'm poor now."

"And yet you don't want money?"

"Not from you," said the man.

"Well, let us get on then," said Frank, a little impatiently. Your name is—

"Matthew Dunkum," said the man, swinging his hat between his legs.

"Villain!" exclaimed Frank Grey, rising.

"Yes, worse than that," said Mat, coolly, "but you mustn't lay the blame of all your brother's badness to me; I know your mother does."

"Have you come here, and at this time,

to excuse your infamy?" said Frank, advancing towards him.

"No! to confess it," said the man.

"Go, go—don't stay here; I will not trouble you for a confession. I have often thought that there was some innate wickedness in my brother—I have been inclined to doubt the influence which my poor mother has always said you have had upon him. But now you confess your infamy. I will spare you the miserable revelation, and will thank you to leave this house, without a moment's delay. Yonder is the door."

"Don't send me away," said Mat, looking up with a painful earnestness—"I have a great deal to tell—it concerns *her*, sir—her, your mother."

Frank paced the room impatiently.

"It is a cruel story," said Mat; "do hear it now; maybe I shan't be in the humour to tell it another time."

Frank was touched by the appealing tone of the man's voice, and his quivering lip.

“I knew your father,” said Mat, looking down upon the floor again, and swinging his hat.

“No great honour that,” said Frank fiercely.

“Don’t be too sure of it,” said Mat.

“We will not discuss the question, now at any rate. I never knew my father, nor have I any wish to see or hear of him—if he be alive, which I doubt. It has been one of my poor mother’s whims that he would return some day.”

“He may.”

“Let him!” said Frank, defiantly.

“His has been a cruel, hard lot,” said Mat; “a cruel, hard lot.”

“If this is all you have to—”

“Don’t hurry me, don’t hurry me,” said Mat. “Have patience, and you will thank me for what I am going to tell—you will indeed.”

“Go on,” said Frank, sitting down and looking contemptuously at his visitor.

“I knew your mother when she was a

girl," said Mat, with a tremor in his voice, "a lovely girl as you could wish to see."

Frank moved impatiently, and stamped his foot.

"I loved her."

Frank rose from his chair; but sat down again irresolutely.

"I was a respectable man then—young, and of her own age, and was the owner of two fishing smacks. I courted her, and we were partly engaged to be married."

This was another bitter pill for Frank's pride to gulp down—to hear such a confession from such a man—but Frank planted his feet firmly on the floor, and swallowed the nauseating dose.

"The young people of Helswick said Sarah was a flirt; but I took it only as their jealousy—of course everybody noticed her. At last George Grey came to Helswick, from Maryport—from this very town—as a carpenter's foreman on the new house then a building in the valley there."

"Don't make more of your story than

necessary; let it be brief, it is bitter enough," said Frank.

"Well then she cast me off," said Mat, raising his voice and swinging his hat fiercely; "she cast me off for him—and I loved her, ay, I'd a give up my life for her. I swore I'd be revenged. I made friends with George Grey; but Sarah feared me, and plotted against me, plotted and plotted, and tried to have me driven from the place. My love turned to hate, —fierce blasting hate."

Frank Grey started at the hissing growl in which Mat exposed the intensity of that bitter hatred.

"I was always thinking of it. I have seen the sea creep into the caverns off Helswick; creep on and on, and at last fill them up, choking every crevice. Revenge filled my heart up, young man, took possession of me entirely."

The man raised his voice, and the veins in his forehead were swollen to distortion.

“Miserable wretch,” said Frank.

“Ay, miserable now, but not then. It was happiness to me when my scheme began to work. She defied me—I could see it in her steady assurance, her firm look when she met me. I hated, loathed her; and yet, oh! how I had loved her, worshipped her.”

The man’s great frame shook with excitement.

“I circulated evil reports about her; I wound myself about George Grey, like a serpent, and at last commanded his ear; one night when I pretended to be in liquor, I spoke lightly of her, and we nearly came to blows; I softened it over though. But my plot had begun to work, and I never left it, I never left it.”

“Do be quicker—briefer!” exclaimed Frank, his heart beating as if it would burst.

“At last the plot was worked out,” and the harsh voice became nearly a whisper, “I made him believe in her dishonour.”

Frank threw himself back in his chair, in silent amazement and horror.

“I need not tell you much more of this part of the plot—I swore to what I said, swore it on the Bible, and you may be sure I had got my scheme so well laid that nobody could doubt her guilt.”

Frank clutched the chair, and his breath came quick and hot.

“It was a lie what I had said; but George Grey left her with her two little ones.”

“And you were revenged,” said Frank so bitterly, that Mat Dunkum cowered beneath Frank’s withering scorn; “you were revenged on an innocent woman and her helpless children.”

“She had money—George left her money, and she had good friends,” said Mat, as if answering his own thoughts. “Mr Mountford was kind to her—she went to be his housekeeper—everybody was kind to her. And I went to the bad. I had my revenge; but I went to

the bad. I lost my boats, and was had up for smuggling; but they couldn't prove it against me; if they had, I shouldn't ha' been here. Mountford was on the bench, and I know she had had a hand in it."

"And what profit is this confession now?" Frank asked.

"Let me tell it out—it is a relief to my mind, and things will come right again yet; it's not too late. I saw your father two days ago."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Frank.

"Let me go on, sir—I shan't be long, don't stop me again. I saw him yesterday, at Helswick. No, I don't mean his ghost, nor anything of that sort; I mean him. I see him wandering about the place; changed, ay, he was changed, but I knowed him though nobody else did, and I've set a watch on him. Don't stop me, sir; let me go on. I am a black villain, I know; but I didn't hate your brother: I was carrying on my

revenge, I know, at first; but I got to like the lad, and did something to save him, as you know: I never should ha' thought he'd come to what he has. And when I sat in that Court, and see his handsome face so altered, I could ha' cried, sir, a thing I've not done for more nor twenty year; but I could: it seemed as if he were my own lad, and when his mother dropped afore me, it seemed as if something was a gnawing inside me, and I wished I were dead."

Here the man faltered, and trembled, and hid his face in his hands; and despite his merciless persecution, Frank felt a momentary pang of sorrow for him.

"I picked her up, and when I looked down on that poor face it seemed as if I was blinded; it seemed as if the feelings I once had came back, all of a rush, like the tide in a great wind; and I made up my mind to confess all."

Seeing the importance of this confession—and thrusting back, by his strong

will, the mingled feelings which rose up as though they would choke him—Frank wrote down the heads of Mat's story. The man willingly signed the paper. His hand trembled as he did so, and his eyes were filled with tears.

“I shall let you know where your father is, sir, to-day or to-morrow, and then you may take your own course. Let her know as I have confessed it all; I shall never trouble her again, nor you, sir, nor anybody.”

Frank said his mother should know of it; and Mat, without another word, sneaked away, with a woe-begone, wretched look, that showed how savagely remorse had gripped him during those few moments when he gazed upon Mrs Grey's death-like features.

It was some minutes before Frank could collect his thoughts. He was altogether at a loss to know what it was best he should do. For the moment, his

brother's fate was forgotten in the discovery which had just been made. Was this return and recognition of his father, at such a time, the work of a kind Providence? Was the softening of Mat Dunkum's brutal nature the working of the same Divine Hand? Would it bring comfort to his mother? Would it soothe the great grief which she was suffering? Or was it but another misery to make life still more bitter?

At nightfall—shortly before the rising of the Court—seven or eight prisoners, whose sentences had been deferred, were again placed in the dock. Amongst the sentences recorded were: Richard Grey and Peter Foster, each twenty years' transportation beyond the seas. Mat Dunkum was in Court, with his eyes fixed upon Richard Grey, when the judge delivered his brief comments upon the young man's crime, closing them with that

terrible sentence ; and he sat staring at the vacant dock when the prisoners had disappeared, and when the hall-keeper came to lock the doors.

CHAPTER XI.

FRANK GREY FINDS HIS FATHER.

THE snow had fallen upon Summerdale, covering everything with white flakes that hung fantastically upon the branches of the tall elms in the centre of the old square; whitened the black stocks; lay upon the housetops as thickly as the thatch; and muffled the footsteps of the people in the three or four quaint, Dutch-looking streets.

Long after the snow had disappeared in other places, it remained in the village-town of Summerdale: for even the snow fell lazily, and lay lazily down, and was loth to depart, at Summerdale. It came down in big, heavy flakes, and alighted on the first opportunity, until it filled

every nook and corner, nestling round chimneys, clinging about door-posts, hanging round window-frames, and covering the highways. So quaint then did the sleepy town appear, with its square-towered church, and its pointed-roofed vicarage, and its timber-fronted school-house, and its thatched cottages with queer gables and little window-panes, that an imaginative writer might have fixed upon it as a scene for strange tales of witcheries and enchantments.

A pale December sun was just disappearing when Frank Grey alighted from the creaking old coach that still ran between a distant town and Summerdale.

He was the only passenger, and was shown into the bar, where a wood fire was lazily climbing up a broad chimney; whilst the reflection of the flame was playing leisurely upon old-fashioned jugs, and cups, and glasses, on a big oak delf-shelf. A shepherd's dog lay asleep on the hearth, and two old men were dozing before their

grog on a dark oak settle at one side of the fire-place, whilst the fat and rosy landlady sat knitting at a round table on the other side.

Frank made inquiries about the Masseys, and resolved on calling upon them on the next day.

After he had done what justice he could to some savoury ham and brown bread, the candles were lighted, and he joined in the lazy talk of the two old men who had wakened up on the arrival of three other persons.

The last comer appeared to be a man of great consideration. The landlord brought forward for him a shiny old chair, and the landlady laid down her knitting to ask how Mr Massey was.

“Better, I think, a little better,” said Mr Evans (as we must still call him at the Crown).

“Is Mr Massey seriously ill,” inquired Frank.

Mr Evans looked round upon the

speaker curiously, and said: "Not seriously, I hope, sir; might I be so bold as to ask if you know Mr Massey?"

"Slightly," said Frank, "I have come here to see him."

The Summerdale toppers nodded at each other, and then looked at Frank, as much as to say: "Indeed! Here is a subject for conversation, friends; a stranger has arrived amongst us, and he knows Mr Massey."

Mr Evans was too well-bred to ask the question which everybody thought he would ask immediately. But the landlady, after looking round the group, and then at the fire, said: "If it's important business, sir, you might go up to-night—we can lend you a lantern, sir."

"Thank you," said Frank, "I will wait until morning."

"It be odd to I," said one of the old men, looking into a mug of hot ale, "it be odd to I if the poor gentleman lives very long."

“Yees, yees!” said another, “as I said to my old ooman, only t’other day, there be that in his faace as ’ud make a man say his prayers.”

“I don’t like that there dog a howlin’ and a howlin’ as ’um do; when a dog sets a howlin’ a-nights in Summerdale, there be death about surely,” said a third.

“Let’s hope not, friends, let’s hope not—Mr Massey is a young man yet,” said Mr Evans; “he’ll not die because a dog howls, you may depend.”

The old men shook their heads, and the landlady said she had heard that, a week ago, the Town Crier’s raven was found sitting on the back of Mr Massey’s empty chair, when the servants came down-stairs, and that it was croaking dreadfully. And she had heard that the cook had seen two white beetles in the kitchen.

“We shall alarm you with our Summerdale omens, I fear,” said Mr Evans to Frank.

"I don't believe in them," the young man replied.

The old men of Summerdale shook their heads, and looked at each other, and then looked at Frank, not reproachfully, but with a feeling of pity for his ignorance.

"Brought up in a large city, perhaps," said Mr Evans, "where you have so much to do with the realities of life, that you have not time to think of the omens which are noticed by us quiet country people?"

The old men looked at each other again, in admiration of Mr Evans's identifying himself with Summerdale. "He'll tell the poor young man sommat just now," they thought.

"I have been brought up in a large city," said Frank, "and am not superstitious; but I can respect the feelings and opinions of those who are older than myself, and who have more leisure to notice the manifestations of coming events, which nature may make, for aught I know, and particularly in quiet old places like

this, which seem almost to belong to a past age."

"You think, then, that intelligence of disaster and death is sometimes communicated to man by means altogether unexplainable by ordinary human rules?" inquired Mr Evans.

"I think of course with Horatio," said Frank, "that there is more in heaven and earth than philosophy dreams of; I think that between two souls bound together by some strong tie of love there may be an intensity of sympathy, almost electrical, which, at the moment of dissolution, may be sufficiently active to communicate to the living one the awful message of death."

Frank spoke so fluently and so well that the old men were astonished. They had not heard any one speak better, except the parson, and a lecturer who, some years ago, had found his way to the platform in the old school-house.

The theme which was thus started, on that cold December night, before the warm

tavern fire, was intensely interesting to the company, and soon entered the ghost-story phase. There had been many ghosts in Summerdale; and even Mr Evans confessed to having thought he had once seen one in an Australian camp, at the diggings, but he wished it to be distinctly understood that he proved it to be mere imagination. The landlady was a firm believer in hobgoblins of all sorts, and the ghost which had been seen at various times in Summerdale had been identified beyond all doubt or contradiction.

It was late when the company buttoned up their coats, lighted their lanterns, and went to their adjacent homes. They all shook hands with Frank, notwithstanding his disbelief in their particular illustrations of his vague theory; and Mr Evans, who looked at him frequently, as if trying to remember where he had seen the face before, said, "I am very glad to have met you, sir; and I hope you will promise not

to leave Summerdale without seeing me again."

"Thank you," said Frank, taking the hand which was so heartily offered to him.

"You have helped us to spend a long night pleasantly—nights *are* long at Summerdale."

So the father and son parted, mutually ignorant of their relationship, yet mutually interested in each other, and both feeling desirous to meet again; and they met, on the morrow.

The next morning Frank presented himself at Oak House. He was shown into the library. Mr Massey and his wife were both there. The husband was lolling in an easy-chair with a book, and the wife rose (as Frank entered) from an ottoman close by his feet.

After some few complimentary inquiries, Frank said: "I received your

letter safely, and beg to thank you very much for it."

Paul watched Frank, with a wondering look.

"Yes," said Mrs Massey, "we thought it our duty to write to you, as soon as we were satisfied."

"I had the news two days before," said Frank, "please to read that."

Mrs Massey took the paper, which Mat Dunkum had signed, and gave it to her husband, who, after reading a few lines, returned it to his wife with a sigh, and asked her to read it—he was not equal to the task. Mrs Massey read the paper aloud; and as she did so, Paul thought to himself how a confession might, some day, be made by Winford Barns; and then again, for a moment, came upon him an impulse to relieve himself of some of the burthen which he felt was weighing him down to a premature grave.

"I was sure of it—I knew it," said Mrs Massey. "Your father I believe to

be kind-hearted and good; that he has been dreadfully punished, and is a heart-broken man, there is no doubt."

"I begin to believe it," said Frank sadly.

"If we had only come to Summerdale to aid in uniting again these poor bruised hearts," said Mrs Massey to her husband, "we should have no cause to regret Denby."

Paul was about to reply, when Kate came into the room; and then suddenly appearing about to withdraw, Mrs Massey said: "Come in, my dear—come in. This is my daughter, Mr Grey; this is Mr Grey of whom you have heard us speak, Kate."

Frank moved to the fair young girl, who returned his bow, with graceful ease.

Kate looked much older than she was; she might have been taken for seventeen. She was tall for her age, and the constant companionship of her parents had given her confidence, which displayed itself in

an unrestrained frankness that was charming: in some girls it would have been forwardness; but in Kate, it was generous amiability. She was more like her mother than like Paul, in appearance; her hair, as we have before said, was a beautiful light brown, and it hung about her shoulders in luxuriant curls.

Frank was struck with her beauty; but he was too much interested in the object of his visit to bestow more than a passing thought upon Kate, who, however, occupied his thoughts for many an hour in the years which followed.

Kate left the room almost immediately after her introduction to Frank, and the business of the morning proceeded. Frank did not tell the Masseys of Richard's shame; he evaded a question about his brother, finding they knew nothing of the tidings which most of the county newspapers had conveyed to their readers. But he told them that his mother was well now, though she had had a severe illness, only

recently. He had not exactly prepared her for his father's return; but he had made her fully understand that this journey of his concerned her husband.

"Mother has always believed he would return," said Frank.

"That is his knock," said Mrs Massey, hurriedly, "you had better go into the dining-room—come this way, and leave me to manage the rest."

The dining-room door closed upon Frank as Mrs Massey received Mr Grey in the hall.

Frank sat there for fully an hour, whilst Mrs Massey, with womanly tact, prepared Mr Grey for the meeting. That hour seemed an age to Frank. In that age he had thought all over the events of his life; he had pictured to himself hundreds of men in no way resembling his father; he had almost decided the question, which was still in abeyance, of his continuing in the house of Welford and Co.; he had thought of Bessie Martin; and of his

brother, who had been removed from Maryport whilst his mother was still suffering from that shock which the unsuspecting foreman had given her when he answered the crier's question, "Guilty or not guilty;" and his fancy was just shaping to itself the pretty face of Kate Massey, when the dining-room door was softly opened and the mother of that sweet face entered.

"He is ready to make all atonement; it has been a great pain and a great pleasure to him, the revelation," said Mrs Massey, in an excited whisper.

Frank bowed his head.

"You will pity him—he has suffered, none can tell how much; he has been to Helswick once a week for the past two months; you forgive him for your mother's sake, for his own sake," she went on, hurriedly.

There were tears in Frank's eyes. Mrs Massey needed no other reply. She went gently out of the room, as she had entered

it, and returned with the man who had expressed such a strong desire to see Frank again. Their eyes met for a moment—a great sob of joy burst from the long-exiled father—and Mrs Massey left them, as we shall leave them, locked in each other's arms.

CHAPTER XII.

GOING HOME.

HAVING carefully prepared his mother, by letter, for their return, father and son left Summerdale two days after their meeting.

The old coach took them a score of miles, and then they reached a railway station, and booked themselves to Maryport.

The train had to call at many extensive stations, on its way, and it seemed to poor George Grey as if everybody had just returned from long exile, or were going to meet those who had just come home.

Boys leaving school, for the holidays, and were met by fathers and mothers and

rosy-cheeked sisters; aunts and uncles, and nieces and nephews, were going to visit each other.

Indeed, George felt that everybody was on their way to see somebody else, from whom they had been estranged for years. He left the carriage at every station, to look at the people hugging each other, and to gaze at the marvellous hampers of geese, and the barrels of oysters, and boxes of oranges, and the bundles of holly and miseltoe.

It was all part of a grand rejoicing in celebration of the returned exile. Frank was delighted at his father's jubilant interpretation of what was passing around him.

How could Frank tell his father of Richard's disgrace? How could he find in his heart to put the smallest barrier between the returned exile and happiness?

"About Dick, what about Dick?" asked the father when they were alone again.

"He is well, sir, no doubt," said Frank, quickly, "but you are full of questions, and tell nothing of yourself."

"What have I to tell?" the father asked.

"A hundred pieces of strange adventure," said Frank.

"We will talk of those over the fire, at home, Frank," the father replied. "Home! It seems all a dream, Frank!"

"Thank Heaven for its reality!" exclaimed the son.

"Ah, Frank, my boy,—I can hardly feel that you are my boy,—you are so much a gentleman, so much higher, so much better in every way than I."

"Now, father, father, talk not so," said Frank, putting his hand over his father's mouth.

"Well, then, I will not; but since you wish me to talk instead of you, I was just going to tell you, if I could, something of the difference between this railway journey and the one which

brought me to Maryport on my return, in company with the friend with whom I travelled. I don't think in all my days I suffered so much as I did during that journey from Liverpool to Maryport."

"How, father, how?"

"We commenced our journey on a Saturday. The train stopped at nearly every station—it was a fourth class train. Nearly everybody had somebody to meet them. As night came on, many working men began to get into the carriages, fellows in their fustian jackets, and with their coffee cans. They were going home to their wives and children. Some of them were carpenters and decorators, who had been out for the week, and were going home to spend Saturday night and Sunday with those whom they loved. I knew, Frank, I knew; and I thought of the time when I was a carpenter, Frank, and when I worked at Denby Rise, and how I used to go to Helswick every Saturday night; how I walked by the beach,

and how I used to go and court your mother when I was a young man, and how—”

“Nay, father, now you are changing from merry to sad; you were all happiness just now.”

“There’s happiness in being sad sometimes, Frank, and I can afford to be down a little now; if I am too happy all at once it may drive me mad.”

“But think of *this* happy train which is carrying us to Maryport now,” said Frank. “We are travelling in company with holiday people, and with friends who are going to join friends they may not have seen for years.”

“I do think, Frank, and the contrast to the other train is all the greater. I want you to know how deeply I have been punished. Here was I, just returned to my native country, after years and years of absence; here was I, a stranger and an exile in my own land, a spectator of everybody’s happiness; for everybody did seem

happy and content but me. I had no wife and children to go home to; I had money in abundance; but there were no arms held wide open for me; no kettle singing on the hob; no wife waiting my return; no children to greet the homeward-bound father. My companion was a married man; he did not know that I was married too; he advised me to find a wife to comfort and console me. By the Lord! Frank, it was like sending a knife into my heart to hear him talk. His wife, his children, his little farm—he could speak of nothing else, and the train went so slow that he cursed it twenty times for its tardiness.”

“We are going very slowly, too, I think,” said Frank, anxious to attract his father from the past.

“I wished a hundred times that I had remained in Melbourne. What did I want treading English soil again? What fiend had whispered me to go and have a kind of last look at the old spot? What was England to me, when all my prayer

could be, as it ever had been, that those I once had loved so dearly might be sleeping in the church-yard? But still I went on for all that, and re-booked myself when it was necessary, and travelled with my happy companion. It must have been God who led me on, for why I should go to Summerdale I hardly knew. My fellow-traveller was going that way, and he spoke of the country about there; and when I came to think more I didn't feel that I could stand Helswick—I felt as though I must approach it very gradually, from a distance; so I journeyed on with my friend to Summerdale, intending to spend a day or two with him, and then go to Denby and Helswick. But you know the rest; how we found the people talking of the Masseys from Denby Rise, and—”

“Yes, now we are coming to the happier part of it; how you made friends at Oak House; and how I met you there, my dear father.”

“And how we have not parted since; and how we will never do so; and how proud I am of you, my boy,” said the father, regaining his former buoyancy of spirits.

A young woman, who was put into the carriage, at that moment, by the guard, thought Mr Grey was one of the kindest, nicest, merriest men she had ever seen. For he chucked her baby under the chin, and nursed it all the way to the next station, where he placed it in its father's arms, and told him he was a happy man, at which the young wife dropped a curtsey, and the father laughed to see her blush. George Grey remembered the time when he had dandled Frank upon his knee, and this was the first child he had ever dared to take in his arms since.

It was late when they reached Maryport. The air was cold and frosty. Every lamp burned in the midst of a little halo of its own.

The bustle and excitement was a great

change from Summerdale. Whilst that moss-grown place had put out its lights, and wrapped itself up in its blankets, Maryport was all life and animation. There was a roar of traffic in the streets, and the shop-windows were decorated with holly and evergreens.

“We shall soon be at home now,” said Frank, when the cab had dashed through long rows of lighted streets, sometimes plunging into the midst of the busiest, and then darting off through quiet by-ways. “We shall soon be at home.”

George felt his heart beating strangely.

“My courage begins to fail me,” he said. “Don’t let him drive so fast.”

Frank astonished the cabman with a request that he would pull in a little—they were in no hurry.

“I shall be all right in a moment, Frank.”

“Of course you will, sir,” said Frank, taking his father’s hand.

After permitting several ’busses and

cabs to pass by him most ignominiously, the driver pulled up, at length, beneath the garden wall of Tristram Lodge, Pur-down.

“Follow me at a little distance,” said Frank, “and when I call, present yourself.”

The father crept on behind his son, and when Frank had satisfied himself that his father was forgiven, he signalled the exile to approach, and left the long-estranged parents to mingle their joys and sorrows.

It was a painful-happy meeting after five-and-twenty years. They would hardly have known each other had they casually met in the streets. But Mrs Grey had dreamed of this meeting so often, had thought of it and prayed for it so frequently, that there was little or no surprise in it to her.

To George Grey it was a great sudden joy of which he had never dared to dream. By the camp-fires of the diggings,

in the counting-house of his Melbourne business, and on board ship, he had thought of his wife and children, but always with a bitter sadness; thought of them as of the dead and yet of the living; thought of them as beings worse than dead; then thought how he had loved them, and groaned if imagination whispered, "how happy might I have been."

Mrs Grey was almost an old woman now; old with grief and trouble; but there was still some of that bloom upon her cheek, and that brightness in her eye, which had attracted George Grey when she was a girl.

To a casual observer George was only a man of middle age; but his strong will, his physical exercise, and his iron constitution had kept off some of the marks which Time sets upon us all.

They might live for a score of years yet, in which to wipe out the past. But their happiness must always be clouded; their

sweets must always be mingled with bitters.

Already the consciousness that he was much to blame for not investigating the calumnies which drove him to a mad desertion of all that he held dear, made George Grey bitterly upbraid himself.

“My poor Sarah,” he said, after they had sat speechless for many, many long minutes, “My poor dear injured Sarah.”

Mrs Grey could not reply.

“I ought to be hanged—I do not deserve this happiness—my poor, ill-used wife.”

“I knew you would come back, George,” said the woman between her sobs.

“God bless you and forgive me,” said the returned wanderer, his heart almost bursting with pity and remorse.

That he should have believed the base falsehoods; that he should have left this poor loving woman to battle with the world alone!

It maddened him now to think of this —“ My poor dear wife.”

He was almost like a child, this strong man who, when two returned convicts tried to rob his gold-taking, had fought them both almost to the death; he wept like an infant, this travel-stained man who had won a fortune in the rough toil of colonial life.

“ It wasn’t your fault, George; I was a little to blame; and the trick, and the lies looked so fair. Don’t cry; it breaks my heart to see you in tears,” said the woman, kissing his forehead.

When Frank returned, and the three had sat over the fire talking of the past, they told the returned exile why Richard was away; and then he felt that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children.

“ It has pleased God,” said Mrs Grey, “ to send you to be my comforter at last. Had not my poor boy stood there before

the judge, Mat Dunkum's heart would never have been softened."

"A husband's and father's curse light upon Mat Dunkum," said George, in his anguish.

"Nay, do not curse him," said Frank, "it was almost pitiable to see him; he called upon me on the day when poor Richard was removed, to say that he should leave the country in the same ship; he said he was the most miserable wretch in the world."

"Curse! Why should I curse?" said George Grey, pausing a moment; "I, who have courted the curse of heaven."

"It *was* hard, George, very hard to see the poor boy."

"Perhaps something may be done for him," said Frank.

"It was not his own fault," said the fond mother; "he was led astray."

"We must make an effort for him," said the father. "If money can do anything, I'll not spare it."

"Poor Richard!" said Mrs Grey, "and poor Frank! I fear Frank has often thought me unkind. He has been the best, the kindest son in the world, George, the most devoted, the most uncomplaining."

"He takes after his mother," said George.

It almost brought the tears into Frank's eyes to hear this eulogium from his mother's lips.

"Well, we must make the best of Richard's position, and do the best for him: it is no use giving way to mere complaining and regret. It is something for me to do, Sarah; an object worth striving for, to restore him to your arms again; perhaps a better son for his punishment," said George, rousing himself.

"Thank God!" said Mrs Grey, "He is merciful as well as just."

"And what of this poor girl—this Bessie Martin?"

“We have heard nothing of her for years,” said Frank, “we have concluded that she is dead.”

“We have almost dared to hope so,” added Mrs Grey.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHRISTMAS.

THE Christmas bells were ringing when the Greys met at breakfast the next morning. The merry Christmas bells were ringing. How happy, how joyful would the sound of the clanging music have been to George Grey had it not been for the thought of that miserable son in irons on the sea !

A fresh pure snow was upon the house-tops, and little icicles hung from the eaves. In the streets, boys pelted each other until they were hot and red ; and the bells seemed to urge them on. From every steeple the noisy concerts pealed. The music influenced everybody. Those who were happy became happier still ; and

even those who were not happy, felt a certain buoyancy of spirit which made them walk quicker, and with a more elastic tread than usual.

George Grey chipped his egg and chatted to his wife; and Frank chipped his egg and thought of that pretty little girl at Summerdale.

"The bells didn't ring when we were married, Sarah," said George; "but it was a snowy morning like this."

"That is just what I was thinking myself," Mrs Grey replied, pouring into Frank's cup a stream of coffee, the aroma of which filled the room, and added to the cozy feeling induced by the crackling wood fire, the soft hearth-rug, and the bubbling urn upon the table.

"I wonder if we have both thought of it, at the same time, before? I dare say we have. What a happy morning it was, Sarah!"

"Not happier than this morning, George, but for one thing."

"No; perhaps not so happy if it were possible that any other morning could be more joyful than that snowy one at Helswick, when we were young. Has Frank done any sweethearting?"

"I think not," said Mrs Grey, smiling. "Do you hear the question your father asks, Frank?"

"No," said Frank, leaving the green meadows of Summerdale, where he had been walking, in imagination, with Kate Massey.

The question was repeated, and Frank gave it a direct negative.

"Have you not an eye upon *any one*?" said Mr Grey, looking good-humouredly towards Frank.

"No," said that deceitful son. For he was deceitful, you know. He had his eye on a pretty fair-haired girl; but then she was so much younger than he; at least she appeared so to Frank, and he dared not confess that he was in love with her.

His feeling for Miss Massey was not

like love, either, Frank tried to persuade himself; but that was a crafty way of satisfying his conscience for telling a fib. Don't you think so?

"I cannot be in love with the girl," he thought. "I only feel as though I should like to protect and watch over her; that I should like to be near her always, and gather flowers for her, and — By Jove! I wish I were a few years younger. I don't know what my feelings might be then. But what would it matter? I could never aspire to the hand of Mr Massey's daughter. As a partner in the firm of Welford and Co., I might perhaps. But *that* dream is over."

Frank was thinking in this wise whilst his father and mother were dressing for Church, and having arrived at the conclusion that even if he were not a little too old to aspire to the love of Kate Massey, it would be absurd to expect that she could ever love him, he dismissed the subject.

The Christmas bells were ringing, we have said—ringing merrily, joyfully, noisily, sweetly, musically. The returned exile, the wife and the son, went to Church, and heard the divine story of the birth of our Saviour. And never went up to the mercy-seat more fervent prayers than those which ascended from the pew in which the Greys worshipped !

It was a new awakening to life for George Grey. The pealing organ thrilled through his soul. Somehow, the Hallelujah Chorus carried his thoughts back, for a moment, to the mighty anthems which he had heard the wind singing in the great forests. And his heart leaped within him when he contrasted the solitary gold miner, away in Australian wilds, with the husband newly restored to his wife, and kneeling by her side, on this Christmas morning, in old England.

The gorgeous reflections of the painted windows fell upon the Church, colouring the holly which was hung about every pil-

lar. The children, in the choir, threw their little souls into the jubilant Hallelujahs, until the old place echoed with their music, long after the last glorious strains of the ever-glorious anthem were concluded. But Richard Grey was out upon the sea in iron chains; and Mrs Grey thought of her son, and prayed that the good angels that were about on this good day would have pity on him.

The preacher told the story of Christ in the manger, and of the star that went before the wise men; and then he told of His divine mission, of His crucifixion, of His resurrection, and of His power to save. It was a strange sermon, full of bits of world-wise philosophy and moralisms. Our Saviour's love of children was a point upon which the preacher dwelt at great length; he contrasted their innocence with the sin and wickedness of maturity; he urged his congregation to love them, and to secure their love. He said they were a type of the purer life to come; and that there

was a moral instinct of what was good in these little ones; he took it as a great good thing to possess the love of a child.

Then he spoke of children in a simply national light, and brought home to his congregation the importance of careful training and education. "It is," he said, "to the safe-keeping of the children of the present day, that Great Britain will have to entrust the highly prized legacy of virtue and liberty, for which the martyrs have bled, and for which our sires have fought in a hundred fields of carnage. Our boys, at college; in our national schools; running wild about our streets; or undergoing punishment in our gaols, will be the statesmen, the philosophers, the authors, the poets, the merchants, the sailors, the soldiers of the next generation. Have you ever contemplated a group of boys and thought so? It is a picture fruitful of many pleasant yet serious ideas, a knot of youngsters in any sphere of life.

"What a happy ignorance youth ex-

hibits of the vastness of its inheritance ! The statesman, in embryo, is intent upon the quality of a 'tor ;' the future poet, who shall touch the hearts of millions, is all engrossed in a paper kite ; the coming judge, with a spinning top ; the divine, with a history of 'Blue Beard.' Happy boyhood ! could ye but get a glimpse of the future, the gigantic machinery of which must be moved by your hands, what a fairyland of romance and prodigy of spectacle would open up to your wondering and bewildered gaze. Happy boyhood ! that never thinks of the battles it will have to fight, the engines to drive, the telegraphs to work, the ships to man, the forlorn hopes to make up, the coals to raise, the perils and dangers that await it in the future that is dawning !

“ No matter what their station in life, boys inherit the same restless spirit of ambition which is characteristic of our race. A love of adventure is visible throughout the whole boy world. At school, the aim

of the young scholar is to rise above his companions. At play, the ambition of the same boy is to be the cleverest at every sport and pastime ; and so on, the spirit of emulation may be traced throughout every phase of boyhood. To direct this ambition into the proper channel—to set before the young aspirants for fame, prizes worthy their energies, calculated to develop those faculties which, left to grow of their own accord, often degenerate into vice—is to make clever and useful men instead of scoundrels.

“ Children born in the midst of poverty are an integral part of the big world, influenced by the same spirit, prone alike to mischief and adventure ; possessing faculties which, cultivated, give stability to our race, adorn our literature, strengthen our commerce, and give additional vigour to our great hives of industry. But unlike the more fortunate of the boy-creation, the children of poverty and profligacy, in most cases, lack the humanizing influences

which cast sunny rays over the lives of their happier brethren. Seldom do the ragged little occupants of the dark side of our cities know anything of maternal solicitude. No father directs the course of their ambition, and sets them an example of honour and honesty; no mother weeps over them in sickness, nor soothes their little childish sorrows; no sister shields their trifling faults, awakening sensations of love and gratitude. Theirs is life in the vale of tears—a sombre valley, always in sight of the sunny hill-tops of affluence. Idleness and ignorance prepare mischief, plan ill deeds, and poor children with heaven-born faculties too frequently become criminals, outcasts from society, weeds instead of flowers, on life's highway. For these “waifs and strays” of humanity, national schools, pastoral instruction, Sunday schools, and other agencies have done much, and may do more in the future. Surely the patronage of the State cannot be more legitimately exercised than in as-

sisting in the moral advancement and education of the destitute children of the nation !

“ The highest duty of those who live in the present is the education of the generation which is rising up around them. This does not consist in the mere teaching of the elements of reading and writing. Education must not be degraded into mere mechanical instruction. It should include a serious and determined effort to implant in the mind of youth noble and virtuous sentiments, the duty of forbearance, the pleasures of benevolence, the beauty of patriotism, the manliness of self-reliance, and above all, the love of our Saviour.

“ It is undoubtedly a grave and serious responsibility, that of being entrusted with the development and guidance of the faculties with which children are endowed. The woman who neglects her duty, as a mother, has much to answer for to posterity. The father who has not given to

his child some good moral chart, which may be consulted when the sea of life is beset with darkness and difficulties, has not fulfilled his mission—has neglected his duty to God and man. Parental neglect is not merely a present injury. It is often an hereditary disease that afflicts future generations. We live again in our children, it is said. For the welfare of mankind this is too true. A bad mother has a host of successors. The taint of bad training, and careless teaching, will run through many families.

“If mothers only thought earnestly about their responsibilities, there would be much less of what is called ‘young ladyism.’ Children are not children now-a-days, they are ‘young ladies’ and ‘young gentlemen.’ Children are not called by their Christian names now-a-days, they are misses and masters. The good plain Mary and Jane and Harry and John, which were wont to be understood in the sort of freemasonry that exists be-

tween children, are obsolete amongst the sons and daughters of *respectable* parents. Little Mary Smith is Miss Mary Smith (unless, forsooth, her parents have adopted the aristocratic substitute of Smythe); and Harry Brown, riding his father's walking-stick yonder, is *Master* Harry, even to his playmate; whose 'ma' would be shocked indeed were not this same mark of respect accorded to her snub-nosed Johnny, who is studying the anatomy of a fly which has recently undergone the amputation of its fore legs. Boys may grow out of this nonsense as they gradually become men, with the exception of those who grow into things called 'fops;' but, alas for the girls! in nine cases out of ten vanity will finish the work which parental folly has begun, and so the stock of silly wives and mothers is perpetuated. With the highest possible respect for the matrons of England of the present day, he could not help thinking that there are excellent lessons to be learnt in economy,

domestic duties, and the bringing up of families, from the lives of some of the ladies whose needlework and home-spun linen are exhibited in our ancient halls and castles. He should like to hear more of the old-fashioned boast, about a young lady being as much at home in the kitchen as in the drawing-room. He would like to hear mothers talk more of the thoroughly domestic triumphs of their daughters, than of their evening parties and ball dresses. He would like it to be an established rule for the daughters of England to have at least as much instruction in cooking, and sewing, and the general management of a household, as in music and the fine arts generally; and as the census always showed a much greater number of women than men, would like to see more female clerks, and less male drapers and waiters."

Then the preacher came back again to the more religious phrase of his sermon, and dwelt upon the Saviour's merciful

consideration for women, showing how he had forgiven her who had sinned the sin so seldom forgiven in this world; and he prayed his congregation to be kind to one another, and not to let the softening influences of this holy day pass away with it; it was only a short time that they were spared to each other, and there was never a death without a living one left behind to regret some unkind or hasty word. Let them continually have in mind the suffering and forbearance, the love, the meekness of the Saviour; and strive to be worthy of the grace which the heavenly martyr had won for all.

“The sin so seldom forgiven in this world!” Had she, the May Queen of years and years ago, heard the Christmas bells? What memories had they brought to her mind? Had she ventured to pray on this holy morning? Had the bells brought back to her the memory of Helswick rectory, and the Christmas parties at which she had been present—one of those pure

innocent beings of which the preacher had preached? Was she listening to the merry laugh of children, in their holiday clothes, passing beneath her window in some London street or alley? Had any good angel dropped a tear of pity over her sad lot? Did she languish in illness, on this holy morning; languish with the bell-music in her ear, and the thorn in her heart? Or had she ended her unhappy life in the great London river? Had an unknown body been picked up, at ebb-tide, and laid in a pauper grave, without a name? and was the forlorn one Bessie Martin? Was that story of a woman leaping from Waterloo Bridge, when the stars were shining on the sullen tide, the story of Bessie Martin? The newspapers record many incidents of this kind. Some good angel had surely kept Bessie from such an end as this! The woman in Hood's heart-piercing ballad had been a child once, happy and innocent. They have all been dandled on parental knees, those poor

fallen creatures whom you see in the gas-light; some of them perhaps have been May Queens; had they died in infancy they would have been angels now, joining in heavenly chants, on this holy day, in the sunny courts above.

Frank thought in this wise as he knelt, after the sermon; and one prayer, at least, went up to heaven, on that Christmas morning, for Bessie Martin.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SUMMERDALE PARTY.

“No, Paul, I cannot think of putting it off; we have kept it up ever since we have been at Summerdale, and I believe it will be good for you,” said Mrs Massey, the morning after Christmas day, just as breakfast was over.

“I am not well enough to join in such an affair,” said Paul, languidly.

“It will be good for you to do so; I was only asking Dr Fitz a day or two ago, and he said that you ought to be roused, Paul; that a jovial party and a pleasant dance, and a few genial friends, would be better than a dozen of his professional visits.”

"I certainly have enjoyed our Twelfth-night parties," said Paul.

"And you shall again, dear Paul, for many years, I hope."

Paul did not reply.

"I have invited the old women to tea for this evening; and the men have had their beef and tobacco, and the children their Christmas toys and fruit, and all the flannel is gone; and the townspeople had their dance in the school-room on Christmas eve, and shall not we have our Twelfth-night?"

"If you will not expect me to dance with all the women, and be merry with all the men," said Paul, turning over the leaves of a favourite edition of Rasselas.

"You must cheer up, Paul; Dr Fitz says so, and *I* say so. And, let me see, we will invite poor Grey and his wife."

"You should say rich Grey," Paul said, "for George told me he had made a great many thousands, and was the owner of half a street in Melbourne."

“Well, then, we’ll invite the rich Greys, and be witnesses of their happy restoration to each other; and we’ll have Frank.”

“Oh! I should like that, mamma,” said Kate Massey, who stood beside her mother. “I think Frank a most agreeable young man.”

“Do you, miss?” said Anna, smiling at Paul.

“Yes; he is so gentlemanly, and has such fine eyes.”

“Indeed,” said Mrs Massey, laughing again.

Paul smiled at his wife; but it was a sad, languid, half-and-half sort of smile.

“Come, Paul, Paul, do cheer up; you are becoming quite misanthropic. Now promise me to rouse yourself, and to be merry at least on Twelfth-night. I shall begin to think you are tired of me, and that you find the society of Kate and myself so disagreeable that you are wearying for a change.”

Anna playfully patted Paul’s cheeks as

she rallied him thus; and he made an effort to enter into her spirit and energy.

"Now, Pa, do be a good darling, merry Pa," said Kate, whipping him with the strings of her hat, which she was just putting on.

"I will try, my pet," said Paul, catching Kate round the waist, and kissing her under the misletoe that hung up in the great dining-room.

"That's right, Paul dear; you will soon be well again if you will only be determined; and you must travel more, love. Our quiet mode of life here—"

"Suits me better than anything," said Paul. "If I am not happy here and with you and Kate, I never can be happy."

"That's a darling Pa; we'll have such a dance, won't we? Let us rehearse a waltz now," said Kate, pulling her father by both hands.

"Not now, dear," said Paul; "but you and I will lead off on Twelfth-night."

“And you’ll promise to be very happy and merry?”

“Yes, I will.”

“Come then, Kate, and we will send out the invitations at once,” said Mrs Massey.

“I am going to see poor old Dame Twerton, Ma, for a minute or two, if you will excuse me; she is very poorly.”

“Then come to me on your return,” said her mother.

Kate threw her arms round her father’s neck, and then tripped away over the hard frozen snow, looking like some bright, happy creature out of a fairy tale.

The invitations were duly despatched, and when the night came the announcements in the great room up the first flight of the broad oak stairs, included the Rev. James Morris (the rector of Summerdale), Mrs Morris, and the Misses Morris; the Rev. Joseph Walsingham (curate of Summerdale); Dr Fitz, Mrs Fitz, and Mr Fitz, junior; Mr Simon Slack (the only lawyer

in Summerdale—happy Summerdale!) Mrs Slack, Miss Slack, and Miss Mary Jane Slack; Mr Henry Bennett (of the Elms, near Summerdale), and Miss Bennett; and many others of local note, in addition to Mr and Mrs George Grey and Mr Frank Grey, of Tristram Lodge, Purdown, Maryport.

It was a thoroughly old-fashioned country party. The Summerdale people were too lazy to be stiff and formal; and they knew each other so well that it was not deemed necessary that the meeting should commence with icy coldness, only to be brought to a mild state of thaw at parting.

The only strangers were Mrs Grey and Frank, and they were at home in five minutes; for being strangers the Summerdale people (however desirous they might be to know all about them) thought it becoming to go up to them and shake hands, and welcome them to Summerdale.

Paul Massey was determined to seem merry, and he carried out his resolve so

fully, that Mrs Massey was in a whirl of pleasure all the night; and everybody laughed and talked and danced so heartily that every now and then Paul caught the infection, and was really happy himself.

Frank Grey soon became a great favourite. In the games of forfeit which preceded the ball, he played his part with such ingenuity and cleverness, that Mrs Massey whispered to Paul, "Young Grey is really the life and soul of the party."

Kate Masey was enchanted with Frank, and told him so, right out; but then you see she was only fourteen, though she looked several years older, and it was quite proper for her to tell any young man that she was delighted with him. Society would be shocked at a young lady being so candid at sixteen or seventeen, though we question whether the Summerdale people would have thought there was anything wrong in it, for they were a very candid race.

When a girl loved a young man in

Summerdale, and another young man loved her, it was not the custom for the lady to deny her love, and torture her lover by flirting with some one else. They were truly an old-fashioned lot, these Summerdale folks.

Mrs Grey was very quiet—she would have been very happy indeed if Richard had been there.

Mr George Grey tempted the old people into corners and told them all sorts of queer stories about Australia; but he did not inform them how it was he had lived so long at Summerdale without telling them that he had a wife and son; he did not tell them how it was that he had changed his name: one old matron, who was more particular than some of her neighbours, shook her head, and asked the Reverend Mr Morris if he did not think there was something very strange in this. His reply was delivered in a loud voice, and it was heard by everybody at his end of the room.

“Mrs Massey told me the whole affair a day or two ago—our friend, Mr Grey (formally Evans), has suffered a great trouble; but he is now happy once more with his family, and we may all rejoice that we have them with us to-night. It had been deemed necessary that he should for a time change his name, but whether as Mr Evans or Mr Grey, we only know him as a kind, honourable, Christian gentleman.”

This was quite enough—too much for the old matron in particular; but she vowed she had the greatest respect for Mr Evans, or Mr Grey, and no doubt she had.

It was quite a notable party this, in the memory of more than one or two of those who were present. Mr Henry Bennett, of the Elms, near Summerdale, fell over head and ears in love with Miss Mary Jane Slack. This was her first party in Summerdale. She had only recently returned from a boarding-school at Maryport, and she came down upon the

young fellows at Summerdale with so many pretty snares and traps, that Mr Bennett was caught in no time.

But we have nothing to do with the Bennetts in this story. What are the Bennetts to us? They are only like the supernumeraries at a theatre. It is not even necessary that we should remember their names. They only "walked on" at this party; let them walk off as they please, and make their marriage settlements, and go where they choose. Our business is with our heroes and heroines—the people whom we have known and talked about since our first chapter, which opened at Denby Rise.

But it is very provoking to the chronicler, who wishes to proceed with his story, that Frank Grey should have made himself so busy about other people's love affairs. He started a round game which the old people said was certainly the most match-making, and yet the most spiteful, game they had ever heard of.

Each guest was provided with pieces of paper. One wrote a lady's name; the second wrote a gentleman's; the third wrote down any place where anybody might be; a fourth set down what anybody might be doing; a fifth set forth the result of all this.

"Consequences" the game was called, and Frank Grey was selected to read, first the names, then the places, then all that was going on at the said places, and next the results. It was all quite new to the old people, who shook their sides with laughter, as well they might on hearing that the Rev Joseph Walsingham, and Mrs Grundy, were at Paris, eating frogs and making love, and that the consequences were serious fits of jealousy, indigestion, and remorse. Mr Henry Bennett was obliged to be patted on the back, or he would certainly have choked himself by laughing, with a biscuit in his mouth, when Frank read out, "Mr Henry Bennett, and Miss Slack, under the misletoe, dying for

love, and the consequences a hasty marriage at Gretna Green." Frank stammered, and really blushed—there is no mistake about it—when he had to read, "Mr Frank Grey and Miss Massey, in a corner of this room, desperately in love, and they don't know what to do."

It was silly to stammer over this piece of foolery, was it not? But Frank, a really clever, cool-headed fellow, could not help it, and everybody laughed. Kate clapped her hands and threw back her long sunny curls, and looked so beautiful that Frank blundered on to the next paper, and really "did not know what to do."

The eldest Miss Slack believed, in her secret heart, that Frank was confused only because he was disappointed; for she had hoped that her name would be coupled with his, and—But here we are again with the Slacks. What have we to do with the Slacks? Trot along, Pegasus, and let the party be closed.

At twelve o'clock—these old-fashioned Summerdale people never kept late hours—at twelve o'clock the shawls and cloaks and rugs were taken down from their pegs, and the guests went home, some in their carriages, some trudging over the soft white snow, and making long muffled-up odd shadows on the roadway.

When they were all gone, Frank went to his room, and could think of nothing but Kate Massey's beautiful eyes; of Kate Massey's silky hair; of Kate Massey's musical voice.

Frank thought she was the prettiest, merriest, nicest creature he had ever seen.

The stage lady, who played Ophelia in those years long ago, had fine eyes, to be sure, and white teeth, and a lovely arm; but Kate Massey was infinitely more beautiful than Ophelia.

He sat before the fire (they had fires in all the bed-rooms at Oak House during the winter), and thought of Kate for an hour or more; and then he walked to the

window, and saw the moon sleeping upon the snow in the garden; the thatched round-looking roofs of Summerdale were just discernible, and the place was so calm and so peaceful in its snow covering; it was like a snow paradise for snow fairies.

In after years that scene often rose up before him, connecting itself, by association, with one of the happiest periods of his life.

CHAPTER XV.

YOUNG LOVE AND OLD LOVE.

WE have drawn the scenes up and down so often in our story, since we first called upon the prompter to blow his whistle for the drop-curtain to fall on certain of our early incidents at Denby Rise, that we have long since ceased to make any special references to the halting-places in this drama.

Our readers will have paused for themselves at the proper times, and have made their comments between the acts.

We stay for a moment here to tell them that the play is drawing on to its close; but that there are still some important acts to come; more sweets and bitters.

By the kind permission and advice of

Samuel Welford, Esquire, Frank Grey had taken leave of absence from the famous business house.

“It will blow over, this affair of your brother’s,” the old man had said; “you must not leave us; if we consent to your remaining I cannot see why you should persist that you cannot do so, because your name is disgraced. We shall postpone the question of partnership, it is true; but we must have your services, Frank; you may take leave of absence until the nine days’ wonder is at an end, and then come back; meanwhile, we can still send to you on any matters of business in your department. Suppose we say you shall have a holiday until the end of the year.”

Frank had accepted the kind old gentleman’s advice and instructions; but soon after his father had returned he had talked the whole matter over with him; and the father was inclined to advise that they should all move to some other town,

and that Frank should start a business of his own.

"I can give you money, Frank," said the father, "thank God, He has enabled me to be of some use to your mother and you after all."

"The best thing, Frank, I think, would be for you to be ruled by Mr Welford—it would be ungrateful to do otherwise—you can tell him what your father can do for you, and whatever Mr Welford says, I think, you should do."

"Perhaps you are right," Frank had replied.

"And perhaps Mr Welford can help your father to get poor Richard's release."

So matters stood, with regard to Frank's position at Welford and Co.'s, when Mrs Grey and his father and himself were prevailed upon to visit Summerdale, as described in the previous chapter.

When they returned, Frank came home with a new crotchet in his head, and a new dream in his heart.

His ambition returned "heavy and thick" upon him. He would live down any disgrace which might seem to have attached to him, through his brother. He would push his way again to the partnership that had been within his grasp. He was not to blame for his brother's sins. Everybody in Maryport knew that he was honourable and upright.

Why should people cast any slur upon him? Why should they associate him with his brother's guilt?

Frank might have spared himself these questions. Nobody had slighted him. Nobody had associated him with his brother's disgrace. All the slurs and slights and distrusters were bred in his own imagination, and existed nowhere else.

Maryport had too much to think of, to lay up lasting memories about a gang of thieves, who had been caught and punished. Maryport had too many ships on the sea, too many banking accounts, too many shops and warehouses; and if

it comes to that, too many thieves, to pay any very special attention to special cases of crime.

There were thousands of people in Maryport who did not know Frank Grey himself; and hundreds, who knew him, had never heard that he had a brother; and yet Frank had fancied that every eye was upon him when he went out, and that every tongue said, "That's the burglar's brother—that's the brother of the fellow who robbed his own mother's house, &c., &c."

Frank ought to have known better; but there are many cleverer persons than he, who think they are being talked about when they are not even thought of.

However, Frank returned from Summerdale, determined to live all this down, and he went to Mr Welford and told him so.

The famous old merchant received him, in his gouty chair, and expressed his pleasure at Frank's sensible resolve.

He knew the world, did Samuel Welford ; and he knew that in a big city like Maryport, a clever, enterprising, honest man would not be cut because he had a low wicked thief of a brother.

So Frank returned to his desk in the old room where poor Harry Thornhill had sat in years gone by ; and he laid his head upon the blotting-pad, and cried tears of joy and sadness.

The people who had missed him for several weeks shook him cordially by the hand ; and never, by word or look, was he reminded of his brother's crime.

It was, however, none the less valiant in Frank to resolve on encountering a monster, because that monster only existed in his own imagination. He is a brave man who can face his own little world, determined to bear the worst that may be said of him. Even your own friends are apt to associate you with the ill conduct of your brothers and sisters. You may have a brother who is a notorious

scoundrel; you may have a sister who has disgraced herself: "Ah, it runs in the blood," says your little world. If you are successful in life, the little world to which you belong, nods, and winks, and hums and ha's behind your back upon all occasions. Beware if you have had a relation who has done something wrong! Even if your great uncle was turned out of school for insubordination, beware! Your little world will be sure to talk about it; and in all probability they will magnify your great uncle's offence into murdering the school-master. Beware of success!

Whilst Frank Grey was girding up his loins afresh to do battle with the world, his father was devoting himself to the concoction of a variety of schemes for obtaining a remission of Richard's sentence. He wrote to his agents in Australia, and to influential friends there, on Richard's behalf, and spent many an hour in arranging with his wife what they should do for Richard when he would be free.

The devoted mother wrote a long letter to be sent out to her boy, telling him all that had occurred since he left, and begging him to strive and be better.

If he would only pray, and be penitent, and seek forgiveness of God, it was not too late for happiness to come again, she said. If it was any comfort to him to know it, she had forgiven him, with all her heart; his father had forgiven him; and so had Frank.

“We often talk of you, my poor boy,” she went on, “and know how you were led away; we know how your good intentions were perverted when you were a boy. Bad company has been the downfall of the best young men, my dear boy; but you must not despond.

“Try to bear your punishment—oh, how my heart bleeds when I think of it—try to bear your punishment, with a contrite spirit. Perhaps I may see you, my poor dear child, again—do try to be good; do try to seek heaven’s forgiveness—if you

can do this you will find your trials light. Chains and fetters of iron are nothing to the chains and fetters of guilt and a sinful heart. My poor boy, God will forgive you, as I do, if you ask Him."

Thus the poor woman poured out her unchanged affection for her worthless son.

Oh, Richard Grey, Richard Grey, thou hast much to answer for!

But Mrs Grey had some happy hours now, notwithstanding the bitters which Richard had thrown into her cup. It was sweet to lean upon her husband's strong arm, and to feel that there was no shadow upon her fair fame now. It was sweet to walk down the Autumn valley of life with the man she had loved through so many changing years; it was sweet to hear him talk of the old days, and to feel that he was almost her lover again, in this latter time. It was sweet to kneel beside him at night, and to thank God for His answer to her prayers in the days that were gone.

When the Summer came they went to Helswick, and dreamed they were young again. They walked on the beach and through the meadows. They sat on the rocks near Denby Rise, and heard the silver bells wandering over the water and through the meadows, as the people at the house in the valley had heard them on the Sundays, years and years ago. And whilst the tide ebbed and flowed, and toyed with the shells and the seaweed, Mrs Grey told George of Squire Mountford, of Anna Lee, of Harry Thornhill, of the shipwreck, and the strange wedding.

In return for her long stories of the past, George told her of his early struggles in the colonies; passing over the cause of his wanderings, and leading his wife back to their young days. He pointed out the spot where he had first seen her, and he showed her where he had cut her name in the rock, when he was a carpenter working at Denby Rise.

The Helswick people, and the visitors

who met Mr and Mrs Grey on the beach, never thought what a dramatic story there was in the life of that simple honest pair, who seemed like an old newly-married couple—talking so earnestly and looking so lovingly upon each other, by the sea.

How seldom anybody *does* think of the remarkable histories which many an apparently uneventful life would make! Yet even the common-place episodes of the lives of the simplest amongst us would be sufficient to prove the verity of the Shaksperian maxim that truth is stranger than fiction. Our childish fancies, our school days, our going out into the great world, and our first impressions of its wonders, our fallings in love, our marrying and the coming to have children of our own to repeat perhaps our own individual histories. Every stage of our lives is a romance; every day has its triumphs and defeats, its comedies and its tragedies. And look at the background we have for our life-pictures, the accessories, the shading, the wealth of

incident, the materials for reverie and moralizing. Watch, for ten minutes, the ebb and flow of one of the busy arteries that keep up the beating of a big town's pulse. Stand beside Frank Grey on the steps of the Maryport Commercial Exchange, where he has been to look at the messages concerning a little fleet of ships expected every hour, by Welford and Co., to be sighted off the Maryport harbour.

Where do they all go to, where come from—the people you see going up and down the street? Will you ever stand under that gas-lighted portico again, and see the same men and women and children go by? Never! In a few moments the sight will be one of the past. Never again will the same forms flit by in company. There is sadness in the thought. Some of them may die this very night. There is a fearful probability about that.

There they go,—one after another,—like shadows in a dream. Old men who have discovered the truth of the preacher's

summing up of life ; young men looking onwards into the future ; women with neither a past nor a future that they care to contemplate ; all wrapped up in their own histories, all with their own individual feelings, and hopes, and fears, and sorrows ; all with their own particular gifts, predilections, and peculiarities. There is the vain man, for instance : you know him by his pompous gait, the head erect, the chest thrown forward, the arms in full play. The centre of the pavement is evidently his particular property, inherited from a race of conceited progenitors. In singular contrast, comes the modest man, in whose cranium the phrenologist would tell you that self-esteem, combativeness, and destructiveness are all much too small, and that his retiring, nervous, and excessively milk-and-water character is the result of these and other deficient developments. Watch the poor fellow as he wends his way along the street. He submits to be pushed and jostled by every one. He

claims not the wall side, neither does he keep to the curbstone. Now he is in the middle of the pavement, now in the road; and whilst the vain man is looking for a comet, or some other celestial phenomenon, the modest man is studying the paving-stones.

Better than either of these two is that man who looks neither too high nor too low, who is modest and yet bold, unassuming yet determined, who claims neither side of the footway, but takes that which is most accessible. The fop is a conspicuous character in the street crowd. Affecting a jaunty air and a cigar, he pays no attention to the shop windows, because, by gas-light, he cannot there see his shadow as he passes, and because he has a score of fascinating glances to scatter about amongst the shop girls just released from their counters and their customers. Then come the mechanic and his wife, off to some place of amusement; men going home from their work; am-

bitious juveniles "doing their earliest weeds;" policemen taking an interest in fat girls sent to post letters; boys singing the chorus of a popular song; women shambling along with feet very near the pavement, and women in all the tawdry finery of fashion, with feigned smiles upon their painted faces. How fast they come and go, how fast they are gone for ever—modest man, vain man, policeman, fop, workman, shop-girl!

We know we have gone out of our province in drawing this gas-light sketch, and we are ready to apologize to the patient reader accordingly; but Frank Grey was watching the great stream of life, surging up and down the street, whilst his father and mother were at Helswick, and we have only painted in the scene before which Frank was standing. Perchance it may help to show how foolish the young fellow had been to think that all Maryport had been intent upon the disgrace which had fallen upon his

name. Nobody pointed at him as he stood there on the Exchange steps; nobody said "there he is;" nobody sneered at him; and Frank would not have seen or heard of them if they had; for though he was waiting there for the messenger about the fleet of ships, he was only thinking of Kate Massey at Summerdale.

CHAPTER XVI.

“FRESH FIELDS AND PASTURES NEW.”

MEANWHILE Mrs Massey thought it desirable that Kate should see a little more of the world.

Paul had an uncle at Tyneborough, one William Howard, Esq., with whom he had recently been brought into communication, on account of some family trust deeds in which Mr Howard was interested.

Mr Howard was a banker, the principal in the firm of Howard and Mentz, and he had written to Paul so kindly that Anna suggested a short visit to Tyneborough.

“I can only say,” the Tyneborough uncle observed, in his last letter, “that I shall be happy to see you and Mrs Massey, and any member of your family, at any

time. Your father was a man when I was a boy, being, as I am, the youngest of a large family—all gone now, alas! But he was my wife's favourite brother. It is not my fault I think that his son and myself have not met or corresponded for many years; it shall not be my fault now that business has re-opened our acquaintance if we do not improve it. I am a widower, and getting old, now; I have two sons—one in India, one at home. I need not say that you will be heartily welcomed by myself and son. We sincerely hope you will visit us."

The letter having been discussed in all its bearings; and the desirability of taking Kate out, coupled with the advice of the doctor that Paul should travel, having been duly urged by Mrs Massey, it was decided that they should visit Tyneborough.

And they did visit Tyneborough, accordingly. It was a long journey, but full of wonders to Kate Massey. When

they once more came in sight of the sea, her young heart leaped with delight, and she talked about Denby Rise.

The effect upon Paul was very different. He knew that rough North-east coast long before he knew Denby; he knew that rough North-east coast when he was a boy, and the contrast between Paul, the merry, reckless youth, in a boat sailing over the bar; and Paul, the man, struck him as the train went roaring along by the water.

The school was close by, where he and Harry Thornhill first met each other; and the tall masts crowded in those docks, and on the river-bank, pointed out the scene of his father's successes as a ship-builder and owner.

He had not the heart to tell Anna this; he was utterly miserable; he wished himself at the bottom of the river.

Mr Howard's carriage was in waiting for them at the railway station, and Mr Luke Howard speedily found out the pas-

sengers, by their luggage. A fine fellow was this Howard junior, with brown curly hair, bushy whiskers, and blue eyes. He was a big, lazy-looking young man of about thirty-three. He rolled about in his gait, like a ship in a ground swell.

“So here you are then,” he said. “I saw you claiming your luggage, you know—I’m Mr Howard’s son—how do you do? Very glad indeed to see you. Here, Jack, Jack.”

At this call a servant came forward, and removed the luggage; whilst Mr Luke Howard gave his arm to Kate Massey, and led the way to the carriage.

Mr Luke Howard laughed and joked in a lazy fashion all the way; he hoped they would enjoy their visit; he had made up a little pic-nic, for the morrow, to Fell-rocks; and on the following day they were to go and see the new port which had sprung up in two or three years, as if at the call of an enchanter’s wand; on the next day he had arranged that they

should have a sea trip in a friend's yacht; and then, as the next day was Sunday, they could go to church, have a rest, and prepare for the following week.

So this fellow who talked slowly and laughed loudly, and rolled in his gait, and had bushy whiskers, and curly brown hair, and wore his clothes loosely upon his broad limbs, had not been idle in his plans.

Kate was pleased at the prospect, and, as was her custom, she did not disguise her feelings.

Mrs Massey said their nephew was exceedingly kind, and Paul said "Yes" and "No," at intervals, until the carriage stopped before a handsome modern house at the outskirts of the town, where the sound of the harbour bar's moaning could be heard.

It was nearly dark when they reached Pentworth, as Mr Howard's residence was called, and a sharp breeze was blowing the Autumn leaves about.

Mr Howard, a little active man, with

white teeth and a shrivelled face, received his guests with every demonstration of kindness, and introduced to them his great friend, Mr Zebidee Grainger, and Mr Grainger's daughter.

Late in the story, you may think, to introduce four new characters. So it is. It will probably lay us open to critical raps on the knuckles. "The author has not learnt the *art* of story-telling—there is a want of construction in the plot, &c." All this will be quite true, we dare say. There are many things which the author has not learnt, besides these. But he simply begs to say that these gentlemen and this lady presented themselves to his notice, at this particular period of this history, and that he cannot exclude them from this faithful record. He hopes they will turn out to be personages of consideration and importance.

Mr Zebidee Grainger, the friend of Paul Massey's uncle, was a gentleman of

position in Tyneborough. He had risen by the force of his own ability and exertions. He had, for years, monopolized the timber trade of the port, and was one of the leading shipowners. A keen-looking gentleman, with his hair closely cropped, and his clothes formally cut, and his linen scrupulously clean, Mr Grainger was a person who would have attracted your attention wherever you might have met him. A firm, compressed mouth, a quick, searching eye, there was a hardness in the general expression and *contour* of his features that was not quite in keeping with his character for piety. But his strictness in religious matters carried him through all this contradiction in the matter of appearance ; and he had made the town a present of one of the largest and handsomest chapels in the place.

They were all religious men in the employ of Mr Grainger, or at least they attended chapel regularly, and were never absent from prayer-meetings. Captains

of vessels and timber buyers, too, wiped their mouths, and put them into a careful religious shape before they entered the private office of Mr Grainger; and they came out sadder, if not wiser, men. For Mr Grainger always finished his business with an exhortation that they should fear the Lord.

“This isn’t the sort of thing that I like, between ourselves,” Mr William Howard said to Paul Massey and his wife, after the pic-nic on the day following their arrival, whilst Kate and Miss Grainger were chatting in Kate’s bed-room. “I confess it’s not the thing that William Howard admires, but Grainger’s a most conscientious man, and it’s his way. If he likes it, why, of course, nobody has a right to interfere. Let every man do as he likes, is] my motto. I was one of the first to take Mr Grainger by the hand: I allowed him an overdraw, sir, of five thousand pounds when he hadn’t a penny. I could see there was mettle in him, and I

knew he would make way, and he has done. He's a Dissenter, and I'm a Churchman; but he's got such extraordinary notions about creeds, that I have only once discussed the point with him, and I never shall again. He is a remarkably clever man, and may do whatever he pleases in Tyneborough. He might be sent to Parliament to-morrow, if he pleased."

Mrs Massey did not like Mr Grainger notwithstanding, and there was somebody else who did not—somebody whose affections Mr Grainger would have given half-a-dozen ships to win; this somebody was his eldest daughter—Laura Grainger, who, at the moment we are supposed to be writing, is sitting on the edge of Kate Massey's bed with one arm round Kate's waist and the other in Kate's hand.

Mr Grainger had been twice married. Laura was the only child of his first wife. By his second he had several children, whom neither he nor anybody else cared

much about, so we shall not introduce them here. Their mother was a strait-laced, red-nosed member of the Primitive Methodist sect; and Mr Z. Grainger had married her because she had money. Laura had never forgiven him for slighting the memory of her mother by such a union; and she had a hatred of what she regarded as her father's cant and hypocrisy.

Perhaps it was wicked for a child to exclude her father from her affection even on this account; but fathers must not lower themselves in the eyes of their children, must not give children cause to withhold their respect, or affection will soon go with it. We do not say whether Laura Grainger had sufficient reason or not for disliking her father; but we know, for our own part, that Laura Grainger was a much more attractive, loveable creature than her father.

A hot, impulsive, warm heart was Laura's. You could see that in her face, at the first glance. She was not beautiful;

we verily believe she had a nose that was anything but classical. Her face was a little too round; but she carried this off with a high plait of hair upon her head, that was very becoming. She was neither fair nor dark; her hair was black, and she bound it close to her head, with the exception of a little cluster of curls, which hung in a bunch behind. Her dress was worn high up in the neck, and fitted her form without showing a wrinkle, and a graceful form it was,—round and supple. Perhaps Laura's most perfect feature was her hand; an eminent northern sculptor had taken a model of it for his study of Venus.

Laura had attained [her twenty-eighth year the week prior to the arrival of the Masseys at Tyneborough. Fifteen of these years she had spent away from home. She would not stay at home, and her father had placed her at an educational establishment, some distance from Tyneborough, where she had remained until now.

“I am not a school-girl, please to remember, Miss Massey,” she was saying to Kate, in that handsome bed-room which had been allotted to our little Summerdale beauty during her stay at Pentworth; “I am not a school-girl; but when my education was considered finished, there were reasons why I should not return home, and so I have remained at Barnard ever since. The principal of the establishment was a friend of my mother’s—indeed, they were girls together, and she is a kind, good woman, and they let me do as I like; and I have my own rooms. I come home sometimes, at my father’s command, on a short stay; we visit here most of the time, and how glad I am that I should be here just when you came! For I think you one of the sweetest, dearest little things I have ever met. There!”

“And I loved you the first moment I saw you,” said Kate, throwing her arms round Laura’s neck, and giving her quite twenty kisses.

It was true love, too, this affection, whatever you may think of such a sudden liking. Girls and women mostly do love or hate each other at first sight; and these two, who are kissing each other so fervently, were of all others the most likely to be fond of each other. Of totally different types of beauty, they were not likely to be jealous of each other. Moreover, Kate had never known what it was to have a companion, and had seen so little of the world, that she would have liked Laura, even had Miss Grainger been unworthy of her affection; whilst Laura, having no pretensions to beauty, as she thought, and being a woman of high instinct and noble principles, and generous to a degree, was sure to attach herself to a pretty, unselfish, lively girl like Kate Massey.

And so these two became great friends, and that is one reason why we have not given Miss Grainger a mere passing introduction in this chapter.

“She does everything so gracefully,” Anna said to Paul when the connubial candle was put out, after the sea trip; “she sits down and rises and moves with a gracefulness that I have never seen in any other woman. I declare I am as delighted with her as Kate appears to be.”

“A pleasant, agreeable girl,” said Paul, drawing his night-cap over his reclining head.

“Pleasant, Paul? She is charming; and what a musical voice. That is just the woman I should fall in love with if I were a man.”

“Tastes differ, you see, my dear,” said Paul; “it’s quite evident that it would not be disagreeable to her if Luke were in love with her.”

“And don’t you think he is?”

“No.”

“Then he ought to be, that’s all I can say; why she is worth twenty Lukes, good fellow as he is.”

“Where are we to go to-morrow?” asked Paul.

“To Greethams, I think they call it—the new port they talk so much of.”

“Then we shall have a heavy day, love. I think we had better reserve our ideas about Laura and Luke until to-morrow.”

Miserable wretch! he reserved everything, this poor unhappy man; reserved everything, for fear the great secret of his life should rush out. As we have said before, he was growing weak, and morbid, and was continually subject to confessional fits. It seemed as if he must throw off the weight that was upon him. Let him pull his night-cap on, and breathe hard—he is not asleep; miserable sinner!

Mr Massey had hit the right nail on the head when he said that Luke Howard's affection would be agreeable to Laura Grainger. For in truth Laura loved this big, lazy, handsome fellow. She will tell

Kate all about it soon, you may depend, and Kate will hate Mr Luke Howard in consequence, hate him most heartily.

The Masseys met a great many people during these pic-nics and excursions; for Mr Howard was wealthy, and respected, and had a large stake in the prosperity of Tyneborough; and his friends delighted in doing him honour. The gentlemen paid great attention to Kate and Laura, and many young ladies fished for the courteous attention of Mr Luke Howard, who was everybody's friend, and who made himself happy under all circumstances.

Mr Zebidee Grainger did not join these excursions; there was too much that was frivolous mixed up in them to suit his taste; but he was glad for his daughter to be there, glad that she should be thrown in the way of Mr Luke Howard. For it had long been a pet scheme between the two grey-beards—the parents of Luke and Laura—that the houses of Howard and

Grainger should be united by this marriage. Laura was a great favourite with Luke's father. He had known her mother, whom she greatly resembled, and he felt that Laura had natural gifts which would be of value to his son.

"The fellow seems to have no idea of marrying," said Mr William Howard, despondingly, during a confidential chat, as he sipped his grog.

"That is remarkable, indeed," Mr Grainger replied, stirring his weak sherry and water, which was the only "stimulant" Mr Grainger professed to take, though we happen to know that he was in the habit of visiting London once or twice in the year, and giving himself up to about three days of savage drinking at an out-of-the-way inn, somewhere in Pimlico. A wily, keen old man, this father of that noble girl—a sly old wolf to throw off his sheep's clothing, now and then, and be the real animal.

"I think the boy (fancy that big-

whiskered fellow a boy!) likes the girl; but I can never get him to see what I mean when I talk to him seriously about her."

"It has not pleased the Lord to give me her affection, simply because of my second marriage, but it has pleased Him to endow her with great qualities; and it would be the pride of my life to see her wedded to Luke. There would not be such a couple in the North."

"I quite agree with you; quite agree with you, Grainger; but we must wait, we must have patience, and do the best we can."

Then the grey-beards talked of trade and commerce; of the rising port on the other side of the bay; of some ships which Mr Grainger thought about selling to Welford and Co., of Maryport. Mr Grainger thought it would be a good thing to sell just now; he could easily purchase again; only four vessels—they were large ones, it was true; but Tyneborough could soon build a dozen such.

So there was a letter despatched by Mr Zebidee Grainger (whilst that happy party were sailing round the new port) to Welford and Co., stating that they might have the ships at a certain price. The next morning this communication was opened by Mr Frank Grey, and after a short consultation it was decided that Frank should go to Tyneborough and close the bargain.

What a pity Frank Grey did not know that Kate Massey was at Tyneborough—the pet-companion of Zebidee Grainger's daughter!

CHAPTER XVII.

KATE AND LAURA.

OF course Laura told Kate that she loved that great blue-eyed fellow, Luke Howard.

"You must never tell a soul what I have confessed to you. There now, don't frown, I know you will not. Bless your dear face, I can read truth and goodness written upon your heart as plainly as if you wore it on your sleeve," said Laura.

They were caressing each other in Kate's bed-room, as usual.

"Are *you* in love? Nay, now, don't laugh at me," said Laura.

"I'm not old enough to be in love," Kate replied, archly.

"Not old enough? how old, then, do

you think we should be before we love?" Laura asked, twirling one of Kate's fair glossy ringlets round her finger.

"Why, eighteen, at least?" said Kate.

"And are you not eighteen?"

"No, I'm not eighteen," said Kate, pursing up her pretty lips and nodding her head merrily at Laura.

"Well, I should have taken you for twenty at least."

"Should you? Oh, I do wish I were twenty," said Kate, earnestly.

"You *do*: then you *are* in love," said Laura, patting Kate's rosy cheek.

"Am I?" Kate asked quite innocently, "perhaps I may be."

Whether she was in love or not, Miss Massey began talking about a certain Twelfth-night party, and of a certain gentleman named Grey, who was delightful company; and then they gossipped about his position, and about Mr Luke Howard's position, and Kate quite agreed with Laura that it was no matter what the pro-

fession or position of a man might be, if a girl loved him, and he was good and true, and loved her in return.

But here was Laura's difficulty ; she was afraid that the love between herself and Luke Howard was all on one side. She had never breathed her love but to Kate, in whose bosom she dropped the treasured secret. Luke was always kind and attentive to her, gave her his arm at dinner, sat beside her, and handed everything she wanted, walked with her, and sometimes sang duets with her, in his big, full, ringing voice. But he was not in the least afraid of her ; that pretty hand never put his heart into a flutter, and he could look into those clear eyes without trembling.

If Laura had known how anxious her father was that she should marry Luke, perhaps she would have given that father a little of her affection : and perhaps she would not ; for she might have feared some foul play, some trick, some strata-

gem, had she known that Mr William Howard was her ally.

"I am often angry with myself," she said to Kate. "I sometimes say I will never come to Tyneborough any more. I find myself doing and saying things which I fear will betray me; and I would sooner die than let Luke know I loved him, if he did not love me in return."

At that moment Kate uttered a little scream, to the great alarm of Laura.

"What is it, my dear Kate?" exclaimed Laura, looking through the window at which Kate was pointing. "I see nothing."

"Don't be frightened—how silly I am, to be sure. I thought I saw Mr Grey pass the house. And, hark! there's a ring at the door."

Sure enough there was a ring, and Lara peeped through a corner of the lowest pane, and could see a gentleman standing beneath the portico. Kate looked over her shoulder, and saw Mr Frank Grey.

“And that is the gentleman you were speaking of. Well, this is charming. Does he know you are here?”

“I cannot think he does.”

“How strange! There, now, don’t go red and white in that manner,” said Laura; “put your hair out of your eyes: why I declare you are trembling like a leaf, you little puss.”

“Am I?” said Kate. “Yes, I believe I am. Whatever shall I do?”

“Put your hair out of your eyes this instant, Miss, and let those roses come back to your cheeks. You will be sent for directly: there, that is better, my pet.”

And then the caressing went on again with the most fervent intensity.

The intelligent reader will perhaps have guessed how it was that Mr Frank Grey stood at the door of Pentworth.

After settling that little shipping affair with Mr Zebidee Grainger, he had presented himself at the bank of Messrs Howard and Mentz with a letter of intro-

duction to Mr Howard. That gentleman, Mr Mentz said, would not be at the bank again that day, as he had company, and he believed had only just returned from an excursion.

“Then I will not disturb him,” said Frank. “If you will kindly present my note to him I will call again to-morrow, I shall not leave until Wednesday morning; I am anxious to see your docks and ship-yards.”

“Please thyself,” said Mr Mentz, who was a primitive old man, and spoke very much like a Quaker, though he did not belong to the order of Friends; “please thyself; I can only say that, if thou would walk as far as Pentworth—it is not more than a mile—William Howard will be glad to see thee; and if thou art anxious to learn something of Tyneborough, he will tell thee how to go about it.”

“Thank you,” said Frank; “then I will act upon your kind recommendation.”

“Thou’ll just catch him before dinner if thou goes now—he dines at four.”

Frank thanked Mr Mentz again, and directed his steps towards Pentworth, and he was quite unconscious of that little scream of Kate Massey’s. An hour afterwards his heart almost stood still at the thought that he might have deferred his visit to Mr Howard until the following day, and then seen him at the bank, and left Tyneborough without dreaming that Miss Massey was near the place. He certainly would not have left Tyneborough without seeing Mr Howard, because Mr Welford had strongly advised him to see that gentleman, as he might be useful to him, in the way of business.

Mrs Massey crossed the hall as Frank entered. You may be sure they were very much astonished; and you may also be sure that as Mr Howard knew that Frank was known to the Masseys, he invited him to stay and dine.

It was some time before Frank sum-

moned up sufficient courage to ask if Miss Massey was there; he was afraid she was not. He was happy, he said, to hear that she was well, and he tried to shield his happiness by excessive courtesy, and to smother it in commonplace remarks about the weather.

What a happy, genial dinner it was! Frank sat between Laura and Kate; on the other side of Laura was Mr Luke Howard; on the other side of Kate was Mr Welton, a Hamburg merchant. They were faced by Mrs Massey, Mr Massey, and several visitors, and Mr Zebidee Grainger was taking his chop at home. Kate looked round at Laura now and then, and smiled, and Mrs Massey watched her daughter, when nobody else did.

Mr Howard was a hospitable host, and he told his stories, and made his jokes at the proper time; though by-the-by they were all about shipping and banking, and making fortunes. He knew every man in

Tyneborough, and how every man had made his money. Frank Grey, who at any other time would have been interested in the old banker's stories, thought little or nothing about them now. When he was not speaking to Miss Massey, or Miss Grainger, he was thinking about the former, and in his heart thanking old Mentz for advising him not to delay his visit to Pentworth.

There is a custom in the North too much honoured in its observance—the custom of permitting the ladies to retire to the drawing-room very soon after dinner.

The port had scarcely gone round the table twice, ere the ladies disappeared; and then Jack, who had attended upon Mr Luke Howard at the railway station, handed round cigars, and everybody smoked, over their port and their claret. Luke Howard threw himself into an easy-chair, and sprawled his legs over the fender, and smoked, and laughed, and talked about the events of the few preceding days. Old Howard kept his seat at the

head of the table, and gave himself up to walnuts and port, as if he were a young man. Paul Massey was quiet, and moody; and Frank Grey, anxious to propitiate that grave parent, exhibited to the company his thorough knowledge of business, and his acquaintance with books. The other men said what they could,—which was not much,—and smoked furiously.

But this part of the dinner was not agreeable to Frank, who was thinking, most of the time, what the ladies were doing, and wondering when coffee would be announced.

The happy time came at last, and then they all adjourned to the drawing-room. The smoke was hanging about their clothes, and it perfumed the room; but the ladies made no objection, and so far as Frank was concerned all the geniality and happiness of the first part of the meeting went on again.

But we will not dwell upon these mere

details. We need not tell the reader how Kate played upon that grand piano, which Mr Howard had bought in London; how Laura sang, and how Luke Howard was prevailed upon to try that duet, about the Fisherman, with Laura. Frank *would* turn the leaves for Kate whilst she played that new arrangement of "Home, Sweet Home," which Luke Howard insisted was the best thing out; and Kate was not at all annoyed when Frank turned the leaves at the wrong time, and she scrambled through the piece with an amount of success that would have astonished the author.

And so the evening sped away, until at last Frank had to take his leave; but it was arranged that on the morrow a little party should be got up for a visit to the docks, and the warehouses, and the ship-yards, and the anchor works. Mr Grey was to be of the party, and so was Kate.

Tyneborough was Elysium to Frank, though it looked more like Pandemonium, as he went home to his hotel. The fur-

naces were blazing and smoking, and illuminating and darkening the sky. The river was glowing with the lights from the anchor works and the forges; and the harbour bar was moaning. But the blazing furnaces were bright, merry, delightful lights to Frank; and the harbour bar's moaning was sweet music.

Mr Welton, the Hamburg merchant, who was staying at Frank's hotel, walked home with him, and confided to Frank his private opinion that Miss Massey was the most charming little girl he had ever met; and that he had serious intentions of telling her so, if an opportunity offered. Did he mean to insult the lady? Frank inquired; because if he did— Oh, no, nothing was further from his thoughts; he had too much respect for Mr Howard, and his admiration of the young lady was too sincere for that. Well, there was an ambiguity, Frank observed, about Mr Welton's remark, which was not agreeable, and he must call upon him to explain. Mr Welton did explain,

all the way to the hotel; and was explaining nearly all the evening afterwards,—in a corner of the coffee-room,—until at last Frank was induced to explain himself; and the end was that the two sat up explaining until long after midnight, to each other's mutual satisfaction.

Frank hardly knew how the time slipped away; the day's surprise had been too much for him, and the prospect of another twelve hours in Kate Massey's society put all other things out of his head.

His Worship, the Mayor, accompanied them through the docks, on the following day; and so, likewise, did Mr Zebidee Grainger, who took occasion, now and then, to remind those around him of the grandeur and beauty of our Lord's works compared with those of man. What were these ships, and those anchors, and that molten iron, and that hot boiling glass, to the sea and the sky above them?

You might have noticed, had you been there, that Mr Zebidee Grainger never

committed himself in this way when his daughter was near.

But Mr Zebidee Grainger could not afford to give up all his sermonizing and his pious ejaculations simply because Laura was of the company. That keen, sly old wolf, in the sheep's clothing, had found his purpose answered too well at Tyneborough by a fierce religious zeal; and everybody knew how sincere he was! When the carpenters were on strike in a great builder's yard (of which he was at the time chief proprietor), because Mr Grainger had taken an undue advantage of an engagement, note the congregation held a special meeting at the Zebidee chapel, and prayed that the Lord might turn the hearts of the benighted carpenters, and drive the devil from the yard of His chosen servant. The men knew it was all over with them then; it was almost enough when Mr Grainger met them in a body, and threw twenty texts in their faces; but when the chapel prayed for them—that was too

much; and the men returned to work at once, which resulted in a thanksgiving meeting, at which Mr Grainger, going down upon his knees on the bare floor, gave thanks to our Lord for expelling the devil from the works.

Unhappy Laura! Her heart revolted at all this; and between her love for Luke Howard and her fear and dislike of her father, she was ill at ease on this journey through the yards. She saw Frank Grey and Kate Massey lagging behind the rest occasionally, and finding themselves next to each other whenever there were steps to be mounted, or short ladders to climb; and then she felt that she had not fired Luke Howard with that passion which had taken possession of her warm heart.

The day was soon over again; soon, too soon over, and Frank Grey had said good-bye; and had paid Mr Mentz a parting visit, and had paid his hotel bill, and taken his departure for Maryport; whilst Laura and Kate were kissing and confess-

ing upstairs, and lamenting their probable parting in a few days hence. For Mr Massey was not well, and had suggested that they should return to Summerdale at the end of the week. Kate had contemplated a short stay at Pentworth alone; but Mr Massey thought, as the Autumn was rapidly drawing to a close, it would be better that they should all return together.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN INCIDENT OF LORD MAYOR'S DAY.

It is extraordinary how much the human constitution will stand. Men who have been dying for years, and who ought to have been killed, time out of mind, by their dissolute and drunken conduct, have lived out the apparently hale men, who have been watching their gradual decay.

Winford Barns was one of those miserable, asthmatical, wheezing, bronchitical mortals, who only enjoy about an hour's life in the twenty-four, and that when they have swallowed as much brandy as would make most men helplessly intoxicated, or raving mad.

This man had not only lived to spend the money which Mr Massey had given

him, personally ; but he had lived to cash the post-dated cheque.

Moreover, he had lived a whole year in Paris, where he had had such a run of luck, at a celebrated gaming-house, that he had deemed it desirable to quit the Parisian capital "all of a sudden."

Giving up his establishment at Hightown, a magnificent festival was got up in his honour at Keem's Harmonic Bowers, prior to his removal to London. The principal tenor had made a song about this chief of the swell scoundrels who frequented the Bowers; and Winford had been attended to his box by a bevy of painted ladies.

Maryport, as he had remarked in a speech upon this occasion, had long been "too slow for him;" so he migrated to Regent Street, where over a magnificent shop, in which was daily exhibited a dazzling array of India shawls, he occupied grand apartments; over a shop which was patronized by Royalty, and which put up

blazing stars above its doorway on the birthdays of Royal personages, and the initials of the new civic dignitary every Lord Mayor's day.

But Winford's course was nearly run. He had not experienced a lack of money since his return from Paris, or Paul Massey would have heard of him, despite their compact. Night after night, he frequented the dens and fashionable stews of the metropolis; and he became nearly as notorious at the Holborn and the Argyle, as he was at Keem's Harmonic Bowers.

Two months after the events recorded in the previous chapter, he came to an ignominious and wretched end.

It was Lord Mayor's day. The famous procession had crushed its way through the city thoroughfares, and had returned from Westminster, in a wonderful November sunshine.

The fog of the previous day had disappeared, as if in compliment to the new

Mayor, and out of respect to the metallic armour of his Lordship's knights.

The cabs had been re-admitted to Fleet Street and the Strand, to Cheapside and the Poultry ; and her Majesty's ministers had said their ministerial nothings over the Lord Mayor's wine.

Night came quickly, and in an illuminated mist, as it comes in London under the influence of gas lamps and radiant shop-windows.

How like a fairy city London by night ! And on this night in particular. For the Londoners not only celebrated Lord Mayor's day with unusual unanimity, because his Lordship was a very popular man ; but for some other special reason which we need not explain.

From the top of Ludgate Hill, down through Fleet Street, along the Strand, up the Haymarket, and through Regent Street, to the Circus, and far away, and up and down every street, to right and left, were stars, and crowns, and Prince of

Wales' feathers and initial letters, in jets of gas and variegated lamps.

The streets were all ablaze, until the sky resembled the appearance of the clouds above Merthyr Tidvil, in Wales, or above the Cleveland Valley, or above Tyneborough, or above the blazing furnaces in Derbyshire.

London bid defiance to November fog that night, though one of those thick rolling battallions of vapour, which come up from the river and the Erith marshes, would have been dense enough to put out nearly all that wonderful luminosity which made the night golden.

As the hours sped on, the city put up its shutters, and the last 'busses began to run along Fleet Street and the Strand. But the more solitary became the Strand and Trafalgar Square, the livelier and the brighter grew an adjacent locality.

The Haymarket lamps from the Haymarket *cafés* sent floods of light across the pavements, and the festal stars and

crowns, in gas and oil, showed every detail of the full cabstand that stretched away down the centre of the road.

It was a melancholy sight so brilliantly lighted up,—as if all the gas in London had been set aburning to show the world the ugliest blot upon England's fair reputation.

Etty's picture of the syrens on a sunny sea-coast, with skulls and skeletons lying at their feet, would have been a suitable transparency for that dazzling establishment with the folding doors, which were for ever opening and shutting, and showing a motley throng of men and women in a flashy saloon.

Towards midnight,—when the Haymarket was busiest and brightest, when the big blot on English morality was seen in its covering of lacquer and gilt,—a woman quietly emerged from one of the by-ways, and passed through the crowd, towards Regent Street. She turned a pale face up to the illuminations, and a

few heavy curls of black hair fell upon her shoulders. She had a sunken, black, brilliant eye and a well-cut mouth; her figure was slight and graceful. There was something in her manner which would have set you thinking of the time when those who passed you in that hideously-brilliant light were innocent and happy, and might have made you picture distant homes from which the pride and hope of the domestic circle had disappeared. And then you might have thought that the "midnight meetings," commenced some years ago, by a number of religious men and women, were, after all, perhaps worthy of support.

Bessie Martin—poor misguided, half-crazy Bessie—passed on her way, with that vacant look in her eyes which had alarmed the landlady of the Maryport Arms.

O that some good Samaritan, some seeker-out of the sinful and unhappy in London hives, had laid a kind hand on Bessie Martin's shoulder, years ago!

She passed on, poor fallen soul! She had been a May Queen once, as innocent as the flowers that decked her brow!

Arriving at the shop where the India shawls were hidden by the dark iron shutters, above which a Brunswick star flared and spluttered, Bessie stopped suddenly, and with a startled exclamation.

At her feet lay a man who had fallen, with a heavy thud, before her.

Several other persons were attracted to the spot, including a policeman, who before looking at the form on the pavement, said to Bessie, "You must not go away."

The man was attired in a light dressing-gown, and must have fallen from the open window of the first storey.

The quick eye of the policeman detected this in an instant, and he speedily alarmed the India shawl house.

A doctor was sent for, and two policeman, followed by Bessie, carried the man upstairs.

Need we say that the bleeding wretch

was Winford Barns. He had leaped out of the window, in a fit of *delirium tremens*. His appearance, and the evidence of his valet, soon satisfied the doctor and the police that such was the case, and they took Bessie's address, and told her she might be wanted again.

The man was not dead, and Bessie, who had been much frightened, lingered in the room.

Laid upon his bed, Winford opened his eyes, and looking about the room, fixed his gaze upon Bessie. Then he made a vain effort to speak.

Bessie being at this moment about to leave the room, the dying man raised his arm, and beckoned her. One of the officers noticing this, detained Bessie, and Winford tried to speak again.

Not for an instant did the miserable sufferer take his eyes from Bessie, except when he pointed to an ebony box that stood upon a toilet stand, close by. This was brought to him, and he tapped it with

his thin hand as if he would have it opened. He tried again to speak, but no sound was heard, except a guttural noise in the throat.

One of the policeman took a small note book from his pocket, and put a pencil into the hand of the dying man, who immediately essayed to write.

After several administrations of brandy, he scrawled, in strange characters, "Ask her name?"

Bessie was asked her name accordingly; she had never changed her name; so utterly hopeless and friendless and abandoned had the poor woman become that she was not ashamed to say Bessie Martin.

Winford Barns's face underwent little alteration, at this announcement; but the discovery of Bessie's name seemed to give him some satisfaction, and he wrote, again with great difficulty, "She is my daughter—look in the desk."

And then he expired in a fit of great agony.

The star outside continued to splutter and flare, and the people and the cabs went by as if that tragedy had not just been played out above the store of silks from India.

The policeman looked in the box, as they were requested, and at the bottom, amongst some old letters, they found a packet inscribed, "The Will of Winford Barns."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BAD MAN'S WILL.

It was a large piece of paper, and inside it there were notes to the value of £100.

On the paper was written:—"If I don't take £100 out of this before I die it will be because I can do without it. If I possess anything else at my decease it will not be in houses and land—if it is I shall make a codicil, and specify the same. I've lived what is called a fast life, and mean to do so to the last—'it was my father's custom, and so it shall be mine'—and my personality, it is likely, will all be found in the house which has the honour of receiving my last breath.

"Some years ago, no matter how

long since — before the wreck of Paul Massey's yacht off Helswick, which was rather a strange coincidence, occurring where it did, and might be set down as a punishment by weak fools—there was a woman I loved. When she died I made her a promise, which I hereby, to some extent, fulfil. She had a child which she sent to be brought up by an old woman with whom she was acquainted at Helswick. That child was called after her mother—Bessie Martin, and when I was at Helswick I learnt that she was alive and well and comfortable—the old woman kept a school there, and if she is living now she will remember that one morning she received five sovereigns in a packet anonymously—I had expectations then of recruiting my waning fortune, and those expectations, so far, have not been disappointed.

“To this Bessie Martin I hereby bequeath the enclosed £100, and all that I die possessed of, whether in money shares,

notes, jewellery, bills of exchange, furniture, plate, land, messuages, tenements, or anything and everything whatsoever,—to this said Bessie Martin, now or late of Helswick, in the county of Denby, for her sole use and benefit; and I hereby appoint James Mentz and William Howard, Esquires, bankers, of Tyneborough, in the county of Northam, my sole executors to see that this, my last will and testament, is carried out.

“If this is not worded in exact legal phraseology, it sufficiently, and I am advised by a barrister friend of mine, legally explains my intentions, which are that Bessie Martin shall have everything I possess, and that my old friends, the Messrs Mentz and Howard, the bankers aforesaid, shall find her out, and see that she has everything, after they have paid for putting me in the ground, and all proper testamentary charges; and all I hope is, that the little beggar (I mean Bessie Martin aforesaid) will have more to

receive than I expect, and that some thief of a husband may not marry her for the sake of her fortune."

The will was duly signed, and witnessed; and the police took charge of the dead man's possessions—£2000 in notes, drafts, and gold; a quantity of jewellery, sundry articles of clothing, numerous tobacco pipes, cigar boxes (full and empty), and a quantity of other miscellaneous articles.

An inquest was held on the body; the northern bankers came to town; and in due course Bessie Martin entered into possession of the moneys and goods of her dissolute father.

The steady old Tyneborough bankers wiped their hands of the whole affair as speedily as possible, you may be sure.

They went back to the North, talking nearly all the way home of the dreadful wickedness of London.

"And yet they call this London the centre of British greatness," said Mr

Howard. "If genius doesn't wish to hide her light under a bushel, she must carry it to the metropolis. That's what they say in books and newspapers."

"It's a great mistake, William, a great mistake," said Mr Mentz, "and the sooner thou makes thy son Luke understand that it is a mistake, the better for him and thee."

"I do talk to him, frequently; I do tell him, and I have endeavoured to prevent him doing our business in town, but the boy likes it, and he's a good fellow."

"So he is," said Mr Mentz, "and he's too lazy to go far wrong; but London is not a place for Luke to see much of; humbug and puffery, and debauchery, and extravagance are everywhere in London."

"So they are, Mentz, so they are; I'm glad we are out of it."

"And they talk about their fine arts, their buildings, and their pictures, Wil-

liam: hast thou seen anything in all London to come up to the warehouses at Tyneborough; or the lighthouse off the bar?"

"Certainly not," said Mr Howard; for he liked to humour Mentz; he did not go so far as that in his contrast of Tyneborough with the metropolis; but he heartily hated and despised the big cockney-town.

"Then there is their preachers. Did'st thou ever hear such stuff as yon fellow in St Paul's preached on Sunday?"

"It certainly was not equal to parson Hughes, in our old church."

"Parson Hughes! why, it was far behind Thumper, who preaches in Zebidee Grainger's chapel. There's no power in the London preaching, no oratory, no force. Let them turn to the sermons of some of the old divines, and see how they thundered away at vice and immorality; let them see how the old preachers denounced extravagant dresses."

“True, Mentz, true, the fathers hit fashion hard.”

Strange that these very shrewd, clever bankers, who were up to so much, had not seen through Mr Zebidee Grainger! They would not assist that miserable Bessie Martin, even in the way of investing her money. Mr Mentz wiped his hands of her twenty times in almost as many minutes. But they had lifted up Mr Grainger—advanced him £5000 when he was not worth a penny. Perhaps they were shrewd in this; for the man had risen rapidly, and had made his mark in Tyneborough, which was no small achievement, considering the Tyneborough competition.

If the northern bankers had been as sharp as Mr Z. Grainger, they might have seen their friend in London. Their friend saw them—saw them being jostled and elbowed in the city—saw them, and pulled his slouching hat further over his long-haired wig; for he had always a luxuriant

crop of hair when he visited London. He was the wolf then, you know; he had room enough in London to be the real animal; he could throw off his sheep's clothing, and worry the lambs, and crunch their bones, and lick his greasy snout to his own satisfaction. Fancy this fellow the father of Laura Grainger! He had been in London two days when the bankers arrived, and he had scented them out the second day, and had watched them under the shelter of an archway—had watched them and laughed, or rather growled, we should say, in his sleeve. "There they go, the two sheep, who think I am one of them; there they go, the conceited old idiots; there they go." And then he went to his favourite back-slum house, and drank whiskey until his eyes were on fire.

Happy ignorance! The two northern bankers still chatted as the train went spinning away along its iron bars. After finishing off London, and utterly blotting

her out of the map, they talked of Bessie Martin, and counted up all the families they had known in which wickedness and misery seemed hereditary. And here they had both many pertinent illustrations to give of Mr Mentz's theory, that once there was bad in a family, bad there would always be.

There certainly are families of this kind amongst the highest and the lowest. It seems as if the bad seed sown at the beginning must grow, and bear its poisoned fruit to the last.

There is a weed in every garden, of which your patient tiller and tender of the soil is always complaining. At the back end of the Autumn he made a desperate attack upon it; he dug and dug until he had fairly turned up the subsoil, to the damage of the fruitful loamy earth above. He had got under it this time, he told you; there was no mistake about it; look at the heap in yon corner. Every twig, every root, every sucker; he had dug at

them, and chopped at them, and picked them out.

On the following day he made a fire of them, and your neighbours complained of the thick suffocating smoke, which climbed, sluggishly, over your wall and crept into their windows.

No matter, there was an end of the switch, or twitch, or bind, or whatever the noxious weed might be. The flowers would have room to strike out their tender roots now that the enemy had gone.

Spring comes, and Summer follows. There are warm rains and sunny days; and with the lilies, and the carnations, and the tulips, and the daisies, up comes the noxious weed again. "There it is," you say to your man, "there it is again;" he knows all about it, and shakes his head, and tells you that the squire's gardener had told him only a week ago that they had been removing a hillock, and had

found the tap, or root, of that same detestable weed struck down twenty feet into the soil!

“Once there is bad in a family,” repeated old Mentz, “there is no knowing when it’s worked out. They were always a bad lot, the Barnses; and Winford’s left one behind to perpetuate the family failing under another name.”

And yet she might have been good, that poor girl who was so kind to her supposed grandmother at Helswick.

“It will do her no good,” said one old Tyneborough banker to the other. “I never knew money do any good to such-like—it mostly makes ’em worse when money comes into bad hands.”

Didn’t your gardener tell you that the compost and the guano which he had put in, at spring-tide, had brought the weeds up—had made them flourish: “it would bring anything out, good or bad,” he said. And so will money; give a man

or woman money, and you shall soon see whether they be good or bad. Unhappily, it is too late to try the test upon Bessie Martin.

CHAPTER XX.

“MURDER WILL OUT.”

PAUL MASSEY had been seriously ill ever since his return from Tyneborough.

He walked about as usual, it is true; but he was weak, and weary.

London doctors and Maryport doctors had seen him, and prescribed for him; but it was as the Summerdale practitioner had said, “nothing would do Mr Massey any good;” his system was giving way under a complication of those disorders which years of excessive mental anxiety will engender, in the strongest constitution.

Remorse had done its worst. Paul could no longer bear the weight of conscious guilt.

The loss of physical strength had

brought on a morbid sensitiveness, which betrayed itself so frequently, that Mrs Massey had long since become convinced that Paul's illness was ministered to by some hidden sorrow.

In years past she had often rallied him upon concealing something from her; but since their removal from Denby Rise she had, as will already have been observed, become more serious in the expression of her fears that Paul had a secret.

"Is it some monetary difficulty that troubles you, Paul?" said the patient loving wife, as they sat together on a memorable afternoon in the familiar library of Oak House.

"No, love," said Paul, pressing his hand over his heart, as he had been wont to do for some time, to arrest a sharp pain of which he had often complained during the few previous months.

"You are very poorly this afternoon, my dear," went on Mrs Massey, taking his hand; whilst Kate, who was sitting on

an ottoman at his feet, pressed her head affectionately upon his knee.

"I am not so well to-day as I have been for weeks," said Mr Massey, despondingly.

"My dear Paul," murmured his wife, "there is something besides physical pain which is hurting you."

"Kate, my love," said Paul, "take a walk in the garden whilst your mother and I have a little talk."

Kate rose immediately, but not without looking surprised, seeing that it had never been deemed necessary to exclude her from the conversations of Oak House.

"What is it, Paul? Have you been more unfortunate in money affairs than you wish me to think? Don't fear to tell me. I shall begin to doubt your love if you have troublesome secrets to keep from me," said Mrs Massey, when Kate had shaken her curls over her shoulders, and wandered into the garden with a book in her hand.

"I am very ill, Anna," said Paul; and the tone in which he made the confession sounded direfully ominous.

"Let me send for the doctor," said Mrs Massey hurriedly, with her hand on the bell.

"No, no, no," said Paul, "it is no good; we will see by and by."

Mrs Massey looked into his face with alarm: she would have pitied him could she have looked into his secret soul, and seen the deadly struggle that was going on there.

"When was the first time, Anna," said Paul, with a great effort to be particularly calm, "you thought I had a secret from you."

"I cannot tell, my love," said Anna. "I never thought seriously about it until lately."

"And you have thought seriously about it lately?"

"I have; but only for your sake, Paul. You would despise me, and rightly, if you

thought I had any weak curiosity which I desire to gratify. But I love you too much not to wish to share your sorrows as well as your happiness.

“Do you remember, Anna, the attack of illness I had at Denby?”

“I do,” said Mrs Massey, sorrowfully, “my poor Paul!”

“I said strange things during the fever?”

“You were very ill, Paul; frequently light-headed.”

“Do you remember anything I said?”

“I remember one thing.”

“What was it?” said Paul, a slight flush tinging his pale cheeks.

“You said you loved me with all your heart and soul.”

Paul smiled faintly, and sadly, and pressed the hand that lay in his.

“Do you remember my talking to you strangely, when I was getting better? Do you remember my asking, Suppose I turn out to be a bad, wicked man?”

“It is little that you have said to me, Paul, which I forget.”

“Then I will tell you a painful, a dreadful story, Anna; summon all your fortitude to hear it; you will require all your courage to sit it out.”

Paul was so pale, and so calm, and his voice was so hollow, that Anna’s heart beat fearfully.

“It has been in my mind to tell you years ago, Anna, but I loved you so much, so dearly, that I could not cause you a moment’s pain. I do not love you the less now; but something tells me I must respond to your desire to share with me a sorrow which has long afflicted me.”

“Dear Paul!” said Anna, now almost as pale as himself.

“I have prayed night after night for guidance; and it seems to have been borne in upon me now at the last, that I should do what I have been on the point of doing many times.”

Paul pressed his hand upon his heart,

and looked at his wife so sorrowfully, so sadly, that the tears came into her eyes, and she bowed her head over his hand.

“There was once a youth, Anna, who loved, tenderly and patiently; his name was Harry Thornhill.”

Anna started, and looked up, wondering and amazed; but Paul felt as though nothing in the world could stop his story; it seemed to flow from him of its own accord, like that of the Ancient Mariner.

“His name was Harry Thornhill; he was as good and true-hearted a fellow as ever breathed. He had a friend, who on his way to call for Harry at the home of the lady he loved was wrecked, and but for Harry’s brave intervention would have been drowned. This friend was Paul Massey, who no sooner saw the lady than he loved her too. He had seen hundreds of beautiful women before, but none so fair as Anna Lee. Nay, hold up thy head, Anna—I am no flatterer. I did not know that she was affianced to Harry Thornhill.”

“She was not,” said Anna, gently.

“ But I loved her with a man’s strongest, purest love.”

“ Bless you, my dear Paul,” said Anna.

Though these tender ejaculations cut Paul to the quick, still he went on with his story.

“ And when I learnt that she returned it, the world did not hold a man so happy as Paul Massey. When he found that Harry Thornhill loved her too, a pang of sorrow for his friend was the alloy to Paul Massey’s happiness. There is no complete bliss in this world. Time flew on, and Anna and Paul were to be married; whilst Harry Thornhill was to go abroad with his sorrow. A day was fixed for him to take his farewell of Denby Rise, and the visit had Anna’s sanction. I had another friend there—one Winford Barns.”

Anna instinctively shuddered at this man’s name.

“ This Barns was a shrewd man of the world,—he saw danger in this visit of Harry to Denby Rise—danger to the hopes of Paul Massey—the soft womanly

heart would relent at Harry's misery, would soften at the parting, and pity would beget love. Paul Massey was a hot-hearted fool, who loved so passionately, so madly, that he would have been jealous of the wind kissing the fair cheek that was his."

Paul paused to gather strength for the remainder of his story. He pressed his hand nervously upon his heart, and breathed with difficulty.

"The day of parting came. Winford Barns, like a sneaking wretch, watched Harry Thornhill and Anna Lee; when they were alone he saw the disappointed lover press a ring upon the lady's finger; he heard the lady murmur some tender words; he heard Harry Thornhill say, 'I knew you would, Anna; I knew you would.'"

Anna trembled with excitement.

"What did the lady mean? What was it that Anna knew she would do? Whose was that ring?"

"My own ring," said Anna, interrupt-

ing the story, excitedly, "my own, Paul. He had taken it from me months before, in mere playfulness, and in the presence of my uncle. He returned it when he bade me good-bye, and asked me to wear it for his sake, as if he were my brother, my only brother. I said I would, Paul, I said I would," and Mrs Massey burst into a flood of tears.

"Look up, love, look up; I will tell you the remainder of the story at some other time."

Paul's resolve was breaking down. In presence of those tears, he felt that it would be better that his secret should die with him. But an inward monitor seemed to say "it cannot be;" and he was pressed on to tell her all, all that terrible story of love and jealousy, with its ghost which had haunted him day and night.

It was a selfish thing to do, to make Anna's life as miserable as his own. He knew it was selfish; this tortured him even whilst his tongue poured the deadly

poison into her ear: but the secret would out—it seemed as if it leaked out of his very weakness.

“Paul Massey has never been jealous since. But on that day the fiend possessed him. He questioned his friend on board the yacht; he asked him to explain the meaning of the ring,—the meaning of those words ‘I know you would.’ Harry Thornhill was indignant at the meanness of his friend; Harry’s proud soul and his pure love for Anna Lee could not brook the vulgar jealousy of the man who had won her heart. Winford Barns, like the arch-tempter himself, stood by to spur Paul’s valiant meanness on. High words followed, angry threats were exchanged.”

Here Paul rose from his seat, his face was hot, and he clasped his hands together as if in supplication; whilst his wife hung fearfully upon every burning word he uttered.

“Blows followed—great God, forgive me!—No matter that, Harry struck the

first. My hand was upon him—it was the hand of Cain—he fell overboard, and was drowned—Paul Massey murdered his friend.”

The unsuspecting wife uttered a piercing shriek, and fell stricken, almost to death, at this terrible confession.

Kate heard the cry from the garden, and came hurrying into the room, with the servants.

They found Mr Massey raising his wife from the ground. He trembled so much that his poor stricken burden shook as he endeavoured to raise it. He was pale as a ghost, and his eyes wandered about the room as if he had suddenly gone mad.

Kate hurried to her mother, and the servants brought water. Explanations were neither asked for nor given.

They bathed her temples, and they put brandy between her lips; and by-and-by the closed eyes opened.

Paul looked on, and said nothing; but his death-like gaze alarmed all who saw it.

"I shall be better presently," said Mrs Massey faintly, and they raised her up.

"Take me to my room."

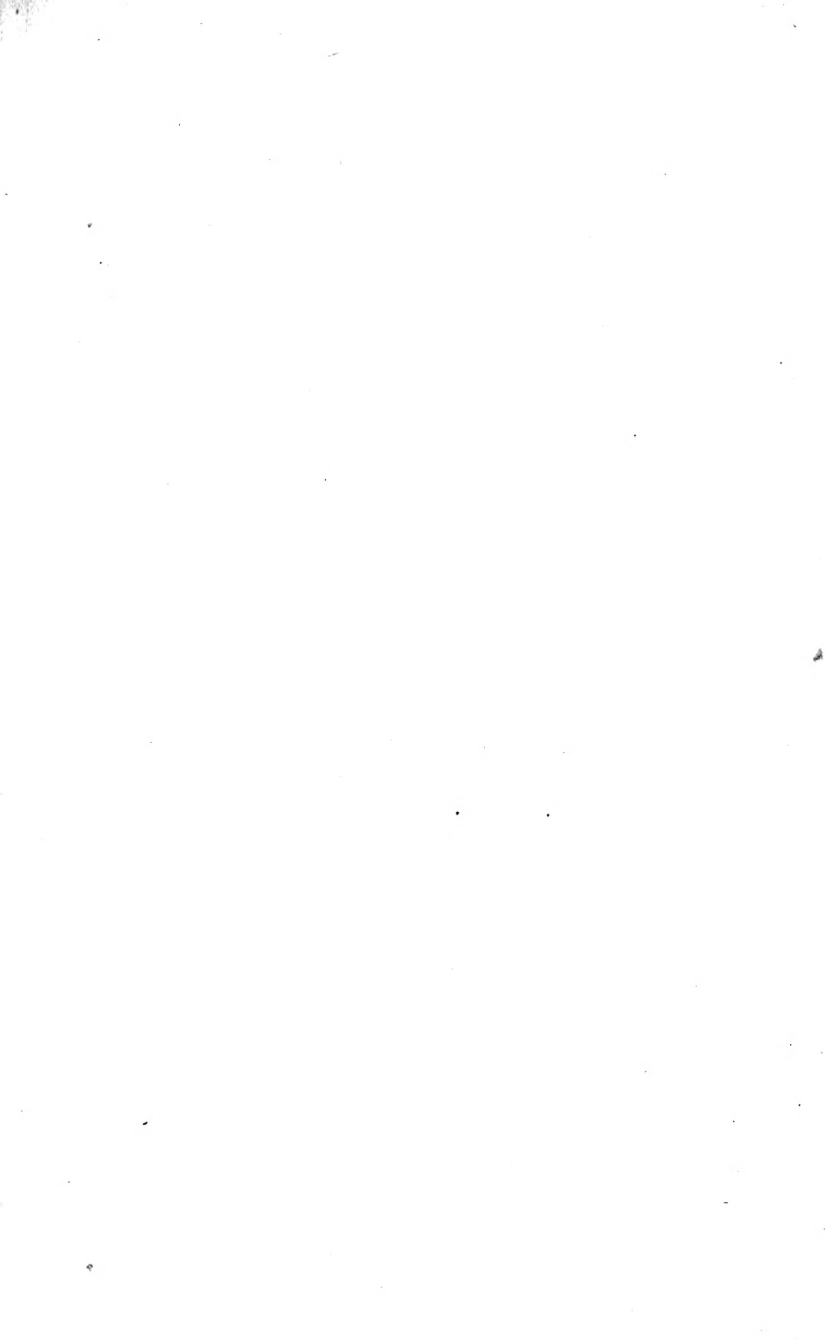
They led her out, and Paul followed them, with his eyes, until all seemed dark and indistinct, and he staggered to a seat just as the doctor, who had been summoned by a thoughtful domestic, entered the room.

Whilst this scene was being enacted, Laura Grainger, in her pretty little room at Barnard, was writing a long letter to her dearest Kate, telling her how happy she had been in her society; how thankful she was they had met; how she should watch over and treasure the friendship they had formed. L. had been very kind to her after Kate left, trying to make up for Laura's sadness at the parting. Oh, if he was always as considerate, as tender as he had been the day after Kate left! They had talked a great deal about Mr Grey, and they all liked him, and she sincerely hoped that he would be successful in his wooing. The day before she

(Laura) had left Pentworth, Mr Welton, the Hamburg merchant, whom Kate would remember, had called. He was in raptures about Mr G., but in greater raptures about Miss Massey. L. had said Kate was a nice little girl, but rather pert: there! what did Kate think of that? Rather pert: that was because her dear Kate did not like him, after she knew how her Laura loved him—her silly Laura. Then Kate's friend, according to promise, enclosed her one of her poems, and told her how she had found things at Barnard on her return: and told her, moreover, that she was afraid that she began to weary of Barnard, and many other things which it is not necessary that anybody but Kate should see.

Was it surprising that when this letter arrived the next evening, that it should lie unopened?

END OF VOL. II.





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